This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

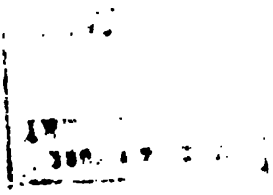
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Holmes
NB



SHE WATCHED THE MOONLIGHT CREEPING ACROSS THE FIELDS.—*Marguerite. Page* 205.

MARGUERITE

BY

MRS. MARY J. HOLMES

P. F. COLLIER & SON

NEW YORK

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
259757A
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1926 L

COPYRIGHT, 1890,
BY DANIEL HOLMES.
[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

Marguerite.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	John Rathburn	7
II.	The Young Couple	13
III.	Mrs. Amy	22
IV.	Little Marguerite	27
V.	Missing Margie	31
VI.	Nannie	40
VII.	Sister Marguerite	49
VIII.	Nannie and Dr. Catheron	60
IX.	Nannie Gets at the Bottom of it	66
X.	Nannie and Jack	76
XI.	A dinner at the Farm-House	89
XII.	A dinner at the Pines	98
XIII.	News of Marguerite	107
XIV.	Marguerite	120
XV.	She Hears the Truth	128
XVI.	The Letters	136
XVII.	Harry	145
XVIII.	The End	155
XIX.	Getting ready for Marguerite	161
XX.	Marguerite Arrives	171
XXI.	Marguerite and Jack	179
XXII.	Marguerite at Home	192
XXIII.	The Next Day	211
XXIV	The Doctor's Tea Party	235

1926 JUL TRANSFER FROM C. O.

CHAPTER.		PAGE
XXV.	Mrs. Bellamy proposes to visit the Farm-House	248
XXVI.	Harry's Drive	255
XXVII.	Marguerite receives Mrs. Bellamy's note	261
XXVIII.	Preparations for the Lunch	272
XXIX.	The Lunch	277
XXX.	Marguerite's Remorse	291
XXXI.	Harry runs Himself	303
XXXII.	The Shadow over the Pines	316
XXXIII.	La Grippe	336
XXXIV.	Marguerite's Diamonds	348
XXXV.	A Guest at the Farm-House	358
XXXVI.	Different Matters	372
XXXVII.	Colorado	378
XXXVIII.	The Storm	388
XXXIX.	Nero	394
XL.	The Result of the Storm	400
XLI.	The Shadow over the Farm-House	407
XLII.	What Happened	410
XLIII.	Harry Interviews his Mother	422
XLIV.	The Wedding	429
XLV.	Jack's Diary	434
XLVI.	Dr. Catheron's Wooing	442
XLVII.	Mind Cure	448
XLVIII.	Mrs. Harry Bellamy	453
XLIX.	Mrs. Guy Catheron	457
L.	Good-bye	469

MARGUERITE.

CHAPTER I.

JOHN RATHBURN.

It was very hot in the hayfield that July morning, and John Rathburn was tired and hungry as he stopped a few moments to rest in the shade of a butternut tree which grew near the fence on which he sat down. He had been at work since four o'clock, and it was now nearly twelve, and he began to wonder if it were not time for Agnes to hang out the white towel as a signal that dinner was ready, and then, in a vague kind of way he wondered what he should have for dinner, and if he should be obliged to get it himself. He had gotten his own breakfast and left his wife asleep as he often did in the morning, and thus he had no means of knowing whether he should find her with a headache, to which she was a martyr, or "just able to drag herself round," which was her normal condition.

"Poor Aggie," he said aloud, as he wiped the perspiration from his face and fanned himself with his palm-leaf hat, "she has a pretty hard time of it, that's a fact, and never ought to have married a

farmer, though I doubt if she'd been happy with Tom Carter, rich as he is. Now, if I could only lift that pesky mortgage, things would be easier, and we might keep a girl. That would suit her tip top. But it takes every cent to pay the interest, and Dobson is beginning to dun for the principal, which means giving up the farm. I should hate to leave the old place where we was born and raised,—Jim and me; poor Jim, to die off there in them foreign parts;" and on the sun-burnt face there were some drops which were not sweat, as John Rathburn thought of his twin brother, James, who, six months before, had died in Italy.

They had been so happy as boys,—he and Jim,—working together on the farm as he was working now, and when the day's work was done playing together around the red house which he could see upon the knoll, embowered in trees and seeming to him the pleasantest and dearest place in the world. But James, whose tastes were different from his own, had soon tired of a farmer's life and gone to Boston into a dry goods store, where, by his faithfulness and energy, he had risen from one position of trust to another until he had finally married the senior partner's daughter, Amy Lawrence, who brought him two hundred thousand dollars. After that the brothers saw but little of each other, although many a substantial token of remembrance found its way to the farm-house, and once, just after his marriage, James brought his young bride there to show her to his mother. But between the country-bred woman and the city-bred girl there was nothing in common, and the visit was not repeated during

the lifetime of the elder Mrs. Rathburn. The father had been dead for years, and when James left for Boston it was with the understanding that if his brother remained at home, caring for his mother, the farm should be his at her death.

"And if you are ever in a strait and want money, don't hesitate to let me know," James had said more than once.

But in John Rathburn's character was an element of pride and independence which would not allow him to ask help even from his brother, except in the sorest need, which need had never actually come. He had worked hard, both early and late, and while his mother lived and was mistress of his house she had managed so well and so economically that he had put by a few dollars each year for the rainy day, whose clouds began to gather from the hour he fell in love with Agnes Moncton, who was teaching the district school and boarded with his mother. She was a pretty young girl, with pink and white complexion, large blue eyes and golden hair which fell on her neck and around her face in long curls, of which she was very proud, and which took so much time to arrange that she was usually late at breakfast and late at dinner and late at supper. For her hair required a great deal of attention, and once, when the muffins for tea had waited until they were spoiled, the matter-of-fact Mrs. Rathburn freed her mind to her son, calling the school-mistress a vain minx who spent half her time before the glass "wapsing that yellow hair of hers round a curlin' stick."

"But it looks mighty neat when its 'wapsed,'"

John said, with a tone in his voice which made his mother glance quickly at him, while a pang sharp as the cut of a knife shot through her heart as she saw the beginning of the end, and knew then that Agnes was to be her daughter-in-law, as well as she did at the close of the summer, when, with many blushes and much stammering John told her he was engaged.

Mrs. Rathburn was too sensible to fight against the inevitable, and forcing down her tears she said, "I shall try to be a good mother to your wife; she is very young, and I hope you will be happy with her."

John had no doubts on that point. He knew he should be happy, for was not Agnes the sweetest and prettiest girl in Rocky Point, and had she not chosen him, a plain farmer, in preference to Tom Carter, a dashing young lawyer from Albany, who had spent a part of the summer at the Mountain House, the resort of many city people, and the market where he disposed of his vegetables and fruits. And more than all, was she not a scholar and a poetess, whose verses appeared in the *Chronicle* over the signature of *Senga*, her name spelled backwards. One effusion, published just after their engagement, had touched him very closely, as it was inscribed to "My Love," and commenced with the lines,

> "If I thought you did not love me,
> I'd have nought to do but die."

But he did love her with all the strength of his young manhood, and in his mind there was no shadow of doubt as to his future happiness. But his

mother, who had lived long enough to know that something more than a pretty face and a gift for making rhymes is necessary to domestic bliss, cried a little as she washed her dishes the morning after John told her of his engagement, and cried a little more as she passed the open door of Agnes' chamber and saw the disorder it was in. It had been a condition of her boarding with Mrs. Rathburn that she should care for her own room, and day after day she left it much as it was now. Her dressing jacket on the floor; a shawl here, a sacque there; piles of dust on the bureau, where her brush lay, full of tangles of golden hair, and her slippers under the bed, which on this particular morning was unmade, as Agnes had dawdled awhile with John in the parlor, and then finished a *poem* before starting for school.

"Well, this beats all. I wonder if it wouldn't open John's eyes to see it," Mrs. Rathburn thought, and spying a curtain which needed fixing, and hearing John in the kitchen, she called him to come and help her, watching him furtively to see what effect the condition of the room would have upon him.

But love is blind, and although John was quite as orderly and methodical as his mother, he saw nothing at all except the toe of the little slipper peeping out from under the bed, and looking so like its owner that had he been alone he would have taken it in his hand just as he did the blue dressing jacket which he picked from the floor and hung carefully across a chair where Agnes' portfolio and a book of quotations were lying. Mrs. Rathburn's ruse had failed, and with an inward groan she tidied

up the room herself and then sat down and wrote her trouble to James as follows:

"John is engaged to Agnes Moncton, who is teaching our school and boarding here. She is a pretty creature enough, and good tempered and all that, but no kind of wife for John; why, she's half cracked about writing verses, in which I see no sense, and Saturdays, when there is no school and the spell is on her, as she calls it, she goes to bed and lies there with her hair flying all over the pillow until she has the piece made up and written out for print. What kind of a wife is that to make butter and cheese and mend John's clothes when I am gone! Why, bless you, she don't mend her own, and she always looks as if she had pulled them out from under the bed and that they were tumbling off from her. She is so sozzlin' and shiftless, and I vum if I think she's neat."

This letter Mrs. Rathburn posted herself on her way to the Mountain House, where she carried a basket of peaches, and after it was done was seized with remorse, especially when Agnes came home from school at night, bright and cheery and so sorry that Mrs. Rathburn had tidied up her room for her, and sorry that she had left it in such confusion.

"I was so anxious to finish the poem," she said, "that I forgot everything else. But I am going to do better and to be—to be—" here the color mounted to her cheeks and forehead as she went on —"to be a good wife to John and daughter to you. I know he has told you, and I hope you are not sorry,"

Mrs. Rathburn could not say she was with Agnes' arms around her and the soft, fair cheek pressed

against her in the coaxing, kittenish way which the young girl had. And so there was peace between them, and whatever the mother might have thought, she never again put it into words, and bravely beating down the pain and apprehension in her heart, entered into all her boy's plans for the future and for the wedding, which took place late in October at the house of Agnes' aunt, who lived not far from Rocky Point, and was her nearest relative.

CHAPTER II.

THE YOUNG COUPLE.

It was a lovely day, and at a very early hour Mrs. Rathburn heard John moving around in his room and singing to himself:

"Never morning dawned so brightly,
Never sky such radiance wore,
Never passed into the sunshine
Such a lovely bride before."

Then she broke down, and as she wiped the great tears from her face, whispered to herself, "Will he sing like that a year from now, I wonder?" and falling on her knees she prayed earnestly that her son might be happy with his chosen wife, and that she might do her duty to them both, and never cast a shadow on their lives. Agnes would have been pretty no matter what she wore, and although her wedding dress of changeable silk, with a white bon-

net and a long feather, was scarcely suitable for the cars, she was certainly as lovely a bride as ever passed into the sunshine, and Mrs. Rathburn began to feel a good deal of pride in the daughter-in-law to whom so many compliments were paid. They were going to Boston to visit James, who could not attend the wedding, but who, at a hint from his brother that such a thing would be very agreeable, had invited the young couple to visit him. This had been Agnes' idea, for she was ambitious as well as vain. Neither she nor John had ever been in Boston, and aside from seeing the city, she wanted to see how rich people lived and to show Mrs. Amy that if she were country born she was not a perfect ignoramus. She was *Senga*, the poetess, and in her trunk were one or two poems which she intended to read to her brother-in-law and ask him to use his influence in getting them published in the Boston *Traveller* or *Herald*, she did not care which; either would probably be glad of them when they knew who she was.

What Mrs. Amy thought of the plan she did not say. She had never been to the farm-house since the day spent there at the time of her marriage two years before; neither did she care to go again or to see either of its inmates, there was so little in common between them and herself, but she was a lady and very fond of her husband, whose wish was her law, and when she heard from him that the brother, whom she remembered as rather good looking, but intensely shy and countrified, was coming with his bride, she resolved to make the best of it, secretly hoping the visit would be short and that none of her

fashionable friends would call. James, on the contrary, who was the kindest hearted man in the world, and who cared nothing for Mrs. Grundy, was delighted. He had laughed to himself over his mother's letter with regard to Agnes' shortcomings, and answered hopefully, and was now glad that he was to see her.

"Jack has never been to Boston," he said, "and I am bound he shall have a good time. I wonder what he'd like to see first. Bunker Hill Monument, of course, and then some theatre, or the Hippodrome."

He went to the Albany depot to meet them,—congratulated his brother warmly,—kissed his new sister, whom he found prettier than he had expected, though dressed in very bad taste even to his uncritical eye, and he chuckled inwardly as he thought of Amy's dismay when she saw the light, changeable silk and white feathers and gloves which marked the bride of a few hours. For himself he did not care, and when on the way to his carriage, which was waiting near the station, he met ex-Governor —— who stopped a moment to speak to him, he introduced his brother and his wife, saying they were just married and asking his friend to call. Agnes had never seen a Governor before, and to be presented to one and then be driven through the streets of Boston in a handsome brougham, with a coachman in livery, upset her completely. If all this honor had come so soon, what might she not expect when it was known that she was *Senga*, the poetess, as it would be if her poems were accepted. Reporters, and interviewers, and notices in the papers, she thought,

with people staring at her, and her poor little weak head was nearly turned by the time the carriage stopped at the door of No. — Beacon street.

But it was turned back again by Amy's manner, which, though very civil, said, as well as words could have done, that there was an immeasurable distance between them. And Agnes felt it and was overawed and ill at ease as she followed the smart maid who showed her to her room. But she was soon herself again, and at the dinner table was very talkative and familiar, addressing her host and hostess as sister Amy and brother James, greatly to the amusement of the one and the annoyance of the other. John, on the contrary, was quiet and awkward and nervous, saying yes ma'am and no ma'am to Amy, and no sir to the colored waiter, who was too well trained to seem to notice any deviation from the strict etiquette which was the rule at his mistress' table.

Fortunately for Mrs. Amy the visit did not last long, for John could only be gone from home a week. But during that time James was unceasing in his attentions and took them nearly everywhere, flinching but once, and that when Agnes read him her poems, asking his opinion of them and if he would take them to some of the papers. His opinion was that they were very vapid and ordinary. But he could not say this to Agnes, and he congratulated his brother upon having married a genius, and hoped the Rathburn family might one day be proud of *Senga*. He would see that the poems found their way to some of the editors, he said, adding that to send them with a note would do quite as well as

taking them in person. Agnes did not think so, but she was obliged to acquiesce, and finally wrote the note herself, asking that an answer, if sent at once, might be directed to Mrs. Agnes Moncton Rathburn, No. — Beacon street, care of Mr. James Rathburn, or if later, to Mrs. Agnes Moncton Rathburn, Rocky Point. The editor was also earnestly requested to keep the identity of *Senga* secret for a time at least, as she did not wish for notoriety. This note a servant took to the office, and then Agnes waited with feverish impatience for the result, watching eagerly for the next day's paper, or for some recognition of her talent, for although she had asked that her identity be kept a secret, she had no thought that it would. But neither reporter, nor notice, nor poem, nor anything appeared until the last morning of her stay in the city, when her articles were returned to her with thanks and the words, "Very good, but not exactly what we want."

Agnes' disappointment was very bitter, and would have been bitterer still could she have seen the derisive smile which curled the editor's lips as he read her "Sonnet to the Hills of New England," and heard him say, "*Senga* is a fool, but as she seems to be some relation to Jim Rathburn we must let her down easy."

That the editor had made a great mistake, Agnes was sure, and insisted upon trying another paper, with the request that whatever the poems were worth should be forwarded to her to Rocky Point. But with this second venture she fared worse than with the first, for as no mention was made of "Jim Rathburn" she was to the editor only one of the many

aspirants for fame who were making his life a burden, and no notice whatever was taken of her until she wrote several times asking why her poems did not appear. Then she received the reply: "Ms. lost and cannot be found, and if found we have no use for it."

After this rebuff Agnes was for a time quite subdued, and gave herself more thoroughly to the light duties which her mother-in-law had put upon her. But she did not like to work, and she hated the daily routine at the farm-house, and sighed for riches and fame, and as Mrs. Rathburn sadly expressed it, "grew more sozzlin' and slatted her things round worse every day of her life." But she never failed in sweetness of temper and amiability towards her mother, or in love for her husband, great, awkward, big-hearted John, who worshiped her as something superior to himself, and loved and pitied and petted her most when she was most delinquent, and all his shirts were buttonless and his socks were full of holes. The old mother, too, learned to love the girl in spite of her faults, but her heart was very sore for John, and when in the spring following the marriage she was suddenly smitten with paralysis, and knew her days were numbered, her whole thought was for him, and what he would do without her. Could she have talked she might have said many things to Agnes which would have been remembered, but there was no power in her tongue to frame the words she would say, and when James, who had been sent for, came, she could only look through her dying eyes the love she felt for her two boys, who watched by her until the flame of life went out.

After the funeral was over, James questioned his brother of his business, asking if he needed money:

"I have a little of my own which I earned myself," he said, "and if you want it as a loan it is yours; if not, I shall invest it elsewhere. Amy has enough for us both, and as she is not strong the doctors have recommended Europe for two years or more, and we are going there in the summer. Shall I send you a checque before we go?"

"No," John said, decidedly.

The farm was his; he was not in debt; he was young and strong and not afraid of work, and would rather not borrow, even of his brother. And so with a warm hand clasp, and tears in their eyes, as they thought of the new grave on the hillside, they said good-bye and never saw each other again.

Four years had passed since that day and people said of John Rathburn that he was looking old and worn. There was a stoop between his shoulders and a few grey hairs were showing around his temples, while his face had a tired, harrassed expression as if life were an up-hill business. "And no wonder," his neighbors said, "with such a shiftless wife, three children, doctor's bills and drugs, and so much interest money to pay to a grasping old man like Dobson, who would get the farm yet if John didn't look out."

And John's life was a hard one, with but little to lighten it. All his mother had feared for Agnes had come true and more, and to the adjectives "shiftless" and "sozzlin'," the old lady could have added "weakly" had she been living. For Agnes' cupboard was full of drugs and patent medicines, and the village

doctor seldom passed the house without being called in to prescribe for her or one of the three children which had come so fast and were so unwelcome to the mother, who would much rather spend her time scribbling rhymes than caring for a baby. The name of *Senga* still appeared from time to time in various papers, although not a dollar had ever been given to the writer as compensation. Still it was something to be known as a poetess among her friends, and when a crack-brained school girl wrote for *Senga's* autograph, Agnes felt that she had her reward so far as fame was concerned, and took to her bed oftener, while she indited the most sentimental trash, with her hair, which she still wore in her neck, floating over her pillow in a very artistic way, as she thought, for, with the aid of a hand glass she always arranged it with a view to effect, should any one happen to come in when her spells were on. For her children she did not seem to care much. An authoress should never be a mother was her theory, which, as far as possible, she reduced to practice, and the little ones scrambled along as best they could, with dirty faces, except when their father washed them, and soiled clothes and bumped heads, the result of negligence on the part of their mother, who thought her lot a hard one and rebelled against the poverty which was daily growing worse instead of better. There was now a mortgage on the farm of fifteen hundred dollars, put there three years before, when she insisted that the house should be made over. She hated it with its slanting roof, its low chambers and big chimney, which she wished to have removed and a hall put in its place such as

other people had, and she wished the roof raised and a bay window put in the sitting-room, where she could watch the sunsets which gave her so much inspiration. If she had such a house she should have some heart to keep it nice and tidy, she said, and in a weak moment John yielded to her entreaties, borrowing one thousand dollars first, and then increasing the debt to fifteen hundred before everything was done and the made-over house furnished and settled.

Had James been in America, John would have gone to him for the money, but James was still abroad, suffering from a heart difficulty which had troubled him since he was a boy, and so John became the debtor of old Dobson, who loaned money at seven per cent. and never knew a spark of pity when the loan was due. Thus far John had kept up the interest, and a good many other things besides, which should have fallen upon his dreamy, dollish wife, with whom he was still in love, and whom he helped in every possible way, often getting his own breakfast and sometimes his dinner, when her spells or her headaches were on her, and always caring for the children when his work in the field was done. How he loved them, his three little girls, —*Marguerite*, with her chubby face, her bright brown eyes and tangled hair, and her mischievous ways which gave her mother so much trouble, but never disturbed him at all,—Isabel, the toddling beauty of two years old, with his mother's face and smile,—and baby Nannie, with Agnes' hair and general delicacy of feature. Three little kids he called them, and his home was brighter and his hardship lighter because of them, for "by and by they'll be

big enough to help their mother, and we'll get out of the woods," he often thought, as he held all three in his lap after his day's work was over, and but for the mortgage he would have been tolerably content, for he was accustomed to Agnes' ways, and did not always hear her when she told him how her head ached, or her side, or her back, and that she could not stand it much longer without a hired girl. That luxury, however, could not be thought of at present, and on the July morning when we first saw him in the hay-field, matters were at their worst. He was owing the doctor and the grocer and butcher, while the mortgage was overdue and Dobson was pressing him to pay so hotly that a foreclosure seemed inevitable. This meant losing the farm unless he could borrow the money somewhere else, and that was nearly impossible. If James had been living he would have written to him, but six months before news had come of his sudden death in Rome, and that avenue of hope was closed and the future looked very dark to John as he sat on the fence fanning himself with his hat, and waiting for the signal that it was dinner time.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. AMY.

From where he sat John could see the white, dusty road for a long distance, winding up the hill towards the Mountain House, which was full of guests that summer. And as he looked, he saw a

carriage coming from that way, in which a lady sat alone, dressed in black. His first thought was that it was some one from the hotel out for an airing, but when the lady half rose from her seat and pointing towards the farm-house seemed to be giving the driver some directions, the thought flashed upon him that it was Amy, who, when she wrote to tell him of her husband's death, said that she should probably return to America some time the following summer, and should then come to Rocky Point. He was sure it was she when the carriage stopped before his gate, while a few moments later there floated from the chamber window, not a towel, but a table-cloth, as a signal of urgent need for him to hurry.

John was not a man who often hurried, but he did so now, with a thought that possibly his brother's widow would help him out of his difficulty, or perhaps would tell him that James had left him something by will. He had half expected some such news at the time of his brother's death, but it had never come and he had said to himself, "Out of sight, out of mind," and given that up as he had many another fancy. He drove his oxen to the barn, attended to their wants, washed his face and hands in the tin basin by the well, smoothed his hair with his pocket comb, and then went into the kitchen, where the smell of something burning, or burned, was very perceptible. As no one was there he went on to the best room, where he found Mrs. Amy seated on the lounge, with Marguerite in her lap fingering her earrings with her little dirty hands and evidently quite at home with the stranger.

Across the room, in a low rocking chair, so

placed that the light would fall upon her to the best advantage, Agnes was posing, in a light chintz skirt and blue jacket, profusely trimmed with cotton lace, and her long curls streaming down her back and giving her a very youthful appearance. She had not a headache, but she had had one of her spells, signs of which were visible in the sheet of foolscap and pencil which lay upon the dusty table, and during the spell she had let the potato kettle boil dry and the peas burn upon the stove, and this was what John had smelled when he passed through the kitchen. She had seen the carriage stopping at the gate, and guessing who her visitor was, had hurried to her bed-room, and exchanging her soiled wrapper for the light skirt and blue jacket, had gone to the door and admitted her sister-in-law with a great deal of demonstration and many apologies for the condition of the house.

"I am not strong," she said, as she took the baby in her lap, "and there is so much work to be done, and we are not able to hire, and all my tastes are against housework, which I hate, it stands so in the way of what I think I have a talent for, if I only had a chance to do myself justice. You remember perhaps, that I write?"

Amy nodded, and Agnes went on: "I have written a good deal since you went away, and many of my articles have been published in country papers, but I don't get any pay, and now I'm thinking of something longer for the magazines, but it's hard work with all I have to do and so many children,—three in four years, and I never wanted any. But you know they are the poor man's bless-

ing, though I can't see it in that light. Margie, don't get so near the lady with your dirty frock. She's been playing in the mud, and has tipped over a cup of molasses, and is about the worst young one you ever saw. If it wasn't for her I could get on better, but she's always in mischief."

"Yes," Mrs. Amy answered, with a sob, as she lifted the child who was always in mischief into her lap, and kissed the little molasses-smeared face, in which she saw a look which made her tears fall like rain.

"What for you cry?" Margie said. "I'se dood, I never mean to let baby fall."

And then Agnes explained that about an hour before, in trying to lift Nannie from the cradle, Margie had let her fall and strike her back on the sharp point of the rocker, but she did not add that Nannie had cried a long time, while she had been so absorbed in her "Summer Idyl" that she had paid no attention except to tell Margie to keep her quiet, until a loud cry roused her to find the baby screaming on the floor and Margie bending over her with little loving coos of tenderness such as the mother seldom gave her.

In a few words, Amy told why her tears fell so fast. Her own little girl, whose name was Marguerite, and who was about the age of the child in her lap, had died on the voyage, and worst of all, been buried in the sea.

"I begged so hard to keep her," she said, "but we were only three days out and the sailors would have rebelled, and so my darling lies in the bottom of the ocean, and I am all alone."

At this point John came in, seeming very glad to see his sister-in-law, who turned from Agnes to him as her husband's brother, and while she told her sad story Agnes slipped out, and in the course of an hour had a very decent meal upon the table, which was also laid with taste, for her poetical vein stood her in good stead there, and when she gave her mind to it, few could excel her either in cooking or in the pretty arrangement of a table or a room. On this occasion there were thin slices of ham, and potatoes fried a delicate brown, and soda biscuits, white and light, with raspberries and cream, and coffee of a rich golden color. And Agnes called it lunch, and presided with a great deal of grace. She had coaxed John into his coat, notwithstanding his protestations that it was too hot, and had given him sundry directions as to how he was to serve and to eat and to act, so that the lunch was a great success, and by the time it was over, Mrs. Amy had learned nearly all there was to know of the family affairs, even to the mortgage. For Agnes let that that out by telling John of a note left that morning from Dobson, who said he must have his money within three weeks at the farthest, and that he should be in town himself the next day and would call at the farm-house. That meant foreclosure, and foreclosure meant ruin, and John's face wore a troubled look when, after dinner, he went out to the barn and sat down upon a bundle of straw to think, while Agnes washed the dishes, and Amy, with little Margie again in her lap, sat in the best room until her brother and sister joined her, when she at

once entered upon negotiations which changed the future of the brown-eyed child now sleeping sweetly with its head upon her bosom.

CHAPTER IV.

LITTLE MARGUERITE.

Amy spoke first of her lonely condition, with her father, mother, husband and child all dead, and then went on rapidly, "I cannot stay in Boston where I have been so happy, and I am going back to Nashville, where I was born and lived for twelve years before my father came north. But I cannot live there alone, and I want you to give me this little girl, who is much like the one I have lost and who has the same name. If you will do this, she shall be my own daughter, with every advantage money can give her, and at my death she shall be my heiress. But there is one condition on which I shall insist. She is never to know from you that she is not my own child. She is very young, and will soon forget her early surroundings. You will be her uncle and aunt; your children her cousins, whom I will see that she loves as she ought. Wait till I am through," she continued, as she saw John straighten himself up to speak, while the expression of his face boded ill to the success of her plan. "There is a mortgage on your place, of fifteen hundred dollars, which you must pay at once, and you have not the means to pay it. Give me Marguerite, and you

shall have my check for more than that amount. Yes, three times the amount and more,—five thousand dollars, which will be a fortune to you, clearing the mortgage and leaving so large a surplus that you can afford the help which Agnes needs. She is not over strong."

This last was said to Agnes, in whom Amy intuitively saw her strongest ally, and who was very white as she sat clutching tightly the arms of her chair, and looking at her husband. His face was dark and firm and set, and his voice trembled as he began: "Thank you, Amy, I s'pose you mean well, but I'm sorry you think me such an unnatural father as to be willing to sell my child for five thousand dollars."

"I will give you more," Amy interrupted him, but a fierce gesture of his hand stopped her and he went on: "It isn't the amount; it's the thing itself. God knows I need the money, but not enough to give my little girl for it and let her go away and never know who we are, Agnes and I,—for uncles and aunts don't count for much when they are poor. No, sooner than give you Margie, I'll lose the house and farm and everything we have, and—"

"Be a fool and go to the poor-house!"

It was Agnes who spoke, and her voice rang out so loud and sharp that Margie opened her eyes and repeated sleepily, "Do to the poor-house. No, I'll be dood."

Then her head sank again on Amy's bosom, while Agnes, with the tears streaming down her face, went on vehemently, addressing herself to Amy: "I don't want you to think that I love my children

less than John. I am their mother, and on that account my love is less selfish, and I should think twice before throwing away this chance for Margie. When she grows up and knows what we have kept her from, do you think she will thank us for letting our feelings come between her and wealth and luxury? No, indeed! I know what poverty means, and if a child of mine can escape it, I ought to let her, no matter how I feel. I have tried it and had enough of it, and don't care to be any poorer than we are now, and if I had my life to live again——"

She was talking now to John, but stopped short, struck by the strange expression of the face he turned towards her as he rose slowly from his chair, where he had sat with his elbows on his knees and his hands clasping his head. This was not the first by many times that Agnes had bemoaned their poverty in a way he did not like, for he fancied he saw in it a regret that when the offer of riches had been made her by Tom Carter she had rejected it. To do Agnes justice, however, no thought of Tom was now in her mind. She was only thinking of all her husband was throwing away, both for herself and Margie, and what must inevitably follow. But John did not know it, and half mad with excitement and jealousy, he said, very low and in a voice she would never have known as his, "Have your way; sell your child if you will. Perhaps it is the best for her. Amy is a good woman, and will bring her up better than you can. But—," turning now to Amy, "if you take her, do it at once. I shall change my mind in an hour."

And without looking at the sleeping child, he

strode from the room through the kitchen, out into the yard, and they soon saw him driving his oxen down the lane to the field where he had been at work in the morning. But the dumb beasts had an easy time that afternoon, and more than once they turned to look at their master standing so still beside them, with his rake in his hand and his head bent down as if thinking intently. Just what he was thinking he could hardly have told, except that it was of Margie, the brown-eyed little girl who had been the first to call him father, but would never call him that again or know he was her father.

"Well, I s'pose it's all for the best. It certainly looks so for Margie, and perhaps it is all round, for she has bothered her mother a good deal," he said, remembering that the child had been a disturbing element ever since she was born, she was so active and restless and always in mischief, chasing the hens, shutting up the cat in the flour-barrel tumbling down-stairs, and as Agnes had told him nearly breaking the baby's back that very day. "Yes, it will be a fine thing for Margie to grow up a lady, and never have to work as her mother does; so I s'pose it's all right. Please God to keep her from feeling above the rough old farmer, her father. But she will—she will— Get out! Get out! can't you?"

He was apostrophizing the tears rolling down his sun-burnt face, and then calling loudly, "Get up, Brindle! get up there, you Buck! what are you so lazy for?" he touched his whip to the oxen, who moved on to the next mound of hay, which he began

o pitch rapidly into the cart, casting occasionally in anxious glance towards the house, and thinking :o himself, "Maybe Agnes won't let her go, after all."

The carriage still stood before the gate, but the driver was putting the horses to it, and John shut his eyes for a minute and winked hard, then looked again. There was a bustle at the door, and Agnes' blue jacket showed through the lilac bushes. Amy was coming out, but was Margie with her? He shut his eyes again, and when he opened them, the carriage was moving down the road, and,—yes, a little white sun-bonnet was clearly defined against Amy's black dress. Margie was going away, and as long as he could see it, he watched the little bonnet, whispering to himself, "God make her happy, and help me to bear it, and Aggie, too. Oh, Aggie, how could you let her go?"

Then putting his head down on Brindle's neck he cried as he had never cried before, and never would again.

CHAPTER V.

MISSING MARGIE.

It was nearly dark before John left the field that day. He had seen the towel floating from the chamber window and knew that it was six o'clock, but time was nothing to him and he lingered on until the sun was down, and then went very slowly

up the lane down which Margie used sometimes to come to meet him, with her hair blowing around her bright face, and her fat arms held up for him to "take her." Everything was very quiet around the house and barn as he unyoked Brindle and Buck, and in his abstraction fed them twice, making them think, if oxen ever do think, that this had been a white day, with little work and double to eat! Washing his hands and face at the well John at last entered the kitchen and finding no one there, or any signs of supper, went into the dining-room, where the table was laid with a great deal of care, and Agnes stood waiting for him, in a fresh chintz wrapper, which she knew he liked, a clean linen collar on her neck, and her hair arranged as she used to do it when a girl.

Agnes, too, had passed a wretched afternoon, and her eyes bore evidence to the bitter tears she had shed. After John left the house she had said to Amy, "I guess we'd better give it up, John feels so about it, and the more I think of it the more I hate to have her go."

But Amy was determined and persistent, and painted Margie's future in so glowing colors that it almost seemed a wrong to the child to keep her in poverty, when something so different was offered her. When interrogated herself as to whether she would stay with mamma or go with the lady, she answered promptly, "Do with the lady." That settled it, and Agnes washed and dressed her in her best gown, saying to her occasionally, "You won't forget mamma."

"No, not forget," was the reply, while the white

sun-bonnet was tied on, and she was told to kiss the baby and Isabel.

Then Agnes carried her to the carriage and put her in and said good-bye, and felt that her heart was breaking, as Margie's cheery "dood-bye, mamma. I'll tome aden bimeby," came back to her, and she watched the carriage out of sight with a feeling that it was a hearse carrying her first-born away. Oh, how she cried when she returned to the house, which was so lonely and empty and still, and yet in the midst of her pain there was always a thought of the grand lady Margie was to be, and of the check for five thousand dollars which lay upon the table where Amy had put it, saying as she did so, "You will remember the conditions. I cannot have a divided love, and Marguerite is never to know she is not my child unless I choose to tell her."

Five thousand dollars seemed a fortune to Agnes. It would pay the mortgage and get her a hired girl and a new carpet and silk dress, and perhaps John would let her use some of it to hire her book of poems published, if she could not get it done any other way. On the whole she had done a good thing and was a most unselfish mother, she thought, as she dried her tears at last and began to put away Margie's soiled clothes, crying again when she picked up the little shoes, both out at the toes and down at the heel, although it was not over three months since they were bought with John's last dollar.

"Well, he will never have to buy her any more though I don't suppose he'd mind it if he bought a pair every week, for I do believe he thinks more of

Margie than of both the other ones, because she s all Rathburn," she said to herself, while the remembrance of John's face as it looked at her when he left the house troubled her greatly. "Poor John, I'm sorry for him," she continued aloud, "and I mean to do all I can to please him and keep things up and tidy."

To this intent she laid aside her muslin skirt and blue jacket and went to work in earnest, cleaning up the kitchen and righting the dining-room, where she laid the table for tea, preparing her husband's favorite dish of fried potatoes and scrambled eggs, adding fresh flowers to those already in the vases, —washing the children's faces and putting on the chintz gown she knew John liked so well. Then she hung out the towel and waited for him half an hour, —an hour,—an hour and a quarter, guessing why he did not come, and determined to keep up bravely and meet him as sweetly as she had been wont to do in her early married days.

"Oh, you've come. Ar'n't you very tired working so late? I suppose you waited to get the hay in, as it looks some like rain," she said, beginning to put the supper on the table, when he came in, and adding that she was afraid it would not be quite as good as it was an hour ago.

John did not know whether it were good or not, but he saw she meant to please him, and he accepted the olive branch, although his heart was swelling in his throat every time he looked at the little high chair pushed back into a corner, and at the vacant place beside him where Margie used to sit. He tried to talk on indifferent subjects, but it

was up-hill business, and both soon relapsed into silence, which was not broken until they were getting ready for bed, when Agnes took up the check and passing it to him, said, "Amy left this for you."

John took it in his hand, and glancing at it, dropped it as suddenly as if it had been a coal of fire which burned him.

"The price of Margie," Agnes heard him say, as she stooped to pick up the check, which she had no intention to throw away.

That was the longest night that either had ever experienced, for though each knew that the other was awake, neither spoke, or scarcely moved, until the early dawn was stealing into the room. Then Agnes gave her husband a shake, and said in a choking voice, "John, John, get up quick and go for Margie. I can't bear it any longer. Amy was to stay at the Mountain House last night. She is there yet."

John needed no second bidding and never dressed himself so quickly in his life. The check was put in his pocket-book to be given back to Amy; the horse was harnessed and he was soon driving rapidly toward the Mountain House, where only the servants were astir. To one of these—the porter—he said, "I want to see Mrs. James Rathburn right away. It's pretty early, but she will understand."

"Mrs. James Rathburn left here yesterday on the six o'clock train for New York," was the answer which killed the brightness on John's face and the hope in his heart.

Amy had gone, and there was nothing for him to do but drive slowly back to the farm-house where

Agnes was waiting in the doorway with a half-pleased, half-sorry look upon her face. She had had time to think, and wonder if it were not a hasty thing she had done in sending for Margie and giving up the five thousand dollars. And now that the plan had failed, she accepted it as providential, and advised her husband to do the same.

"It's no use writing to Boston," she said, when John suggested it, "for you know Amy said the old house was sold and occupied by strangers, and to go to New York and look her up is like hunting for a needle in a hay mow. Better let things take their course. We shall hear from Amy before long, and then see how we feel."

But they did not hear from Amy for two weeks or more, and when at last she wrote it was from Nashville, whither she had gone at once and where she was again in the home of her childhood.

"I did not stay at the Mountain House that night," she wrote, "but went to New York after my boxes and trunks, and then came straight to Nashville, bringing Margie with me. She is a dear little creature, and my heart does not ache half as hard as it did before I had her. Believe me, you did a Christian act when you let me have the child, for without her I should have gone mad, while to her the change is everything. I shall be the kindest of mothers to her, and bring her up the best I know how. She calls me mamma now, when she calls me anything, and I have told no one as yet that she is not my own. I wish them to think that she is, for it seems to me that will bring her nearer to me, and it will certainly prevent her knowing that I am not her mother. My dead darling's clothes fit her perfectly, and if you could see her

this moment in her white gown and plaid sash playing on the lawn with the colored girl who attends her, Agnes' artistic tastes at least would say you were right to surrender your own wishes for the good of the child. She speaks of you, of course, but in such a way that the stupid blacks do not suspect. The baby is the one she talks of most, and last night she cried to see her, but was soon quieted with a large doll I have bought her. She sleeps in a little crib with blue silk hangings in my room, and at present I undress her myself and put her to bed, and I teach her to pray for you all as uncle and aunt and cousins. I shall bring her to see you after she is old enough not to remember that she was ever there before, and I trust you to keep your part of the contract.

Yours sincerely

AMY RATHBURN."

"P. S. Margie has just come in with her hands full of flowers, one of which she bade me send to papa. So, you see she has not forgotten."

It was a large white daisy, and John handled it as tenderly as if it had been Margie herself, and when Agnes did not see him he folded a bit of soft tissue paper around the blossom and put it in his pocketbook beside the check, which had not yet been cashed.

There were no neighbors very near the farm-house and as the summer was a busy time with them very few had called since Margie went away. To these Agnes had explained, saying that Amy had come to them nearly wild at the loss of her husband and child, and had begged so hard for Margie that they consented very unwillingly to part with her, adding

that she had made John go to the Mountain House for her early the next morning but to no purpose as Amy was gone, and now she did not know what they should do.

"Let her stay. It's a splendid chance for her," the woman said, who had no children, while the one who had six said, "Yes, it's a splendid chance,—for Margie,—but don't you miss her awfully?"

"Of course I do," Agnes answered with a sob, and then, wishing to make as clean a breast of it as she ever made of anything, she told in a mixed up, roundabout way of Amy's wish that Margie should be brought up in the belief that she was her mother, and Agnes only her aunt.

This was a new view of the situation, but on the whole the neighbors said they guessed they would let it run awhile anyway, and after the receipt of Amy's letter, John, encouraged by his wife, concluded to let it run, hoping that Amy's whim would not last long and determining to use only as much of the money as was necessary to pay the mortgage. The rest he would deposit in the Millville Savings Bank, adding to it as he could from time to time until he had the whole five thousand for Amy when the contract was broken. But this was easier said than done. Dobson was paid, somewhat to his surprise, and then there were in the Bank three-thousand five hundred dollars, which John firmly intended should stay there. But weak as Agnes was physically, her will or persistency was stronger than his, and when the baby Nannie was suddenly taken ill and required all her time, a girl was hired to do the work, and when Nannie recovered, Agnes

declared herself so completely "run down" that the girl was retained and money taken from the bank to pay both her and the doctor. After this it was comparatively easy to draw from the fund when needed, and gradually Agnes had the new carpet and the silk dress, and the house was painted, and a second hand piano was bought, on which Agnes drummed hour after hour, while the girl in the kitchen did as she liked, and the children, too, for that matter. But against hiring the poems published, John set his face like a flint, and Agnes was compelled to yield in that respect. But she scribbled just the same, making Margie the subject of her muse, and pouring out strains so pathetic and sad that one would have thought her a second Rizpah mourning for her children. These poems, which were sent everywhere, sometimes found their way into the local papers, where *Senga* was getting to be a familiar name, while *Senga* herself was said by the neighbors to be more addled than ever, and John was pitied as men generally are whose wives have more sentiment than brain, and more brain than common sense. And oh, how he missed little Margie, and how lonely and still it was everywhere without her. The hens and chickens were no longer chased into a state bordering upon distraction, but cackled and fed quietly by the kitchen door, or walked into the kitchen itself, if they liked, when *Senga* was having a "spell" and the girl was asleep up stairs. The cat with her kittens purred in the sunshine unmolested, the molasses cup stood upon the table with only the flies to eat it, and there were no more shoes to be bought every few weeks, for the

dear little feet which had kicked the toes out so fast were far away and shod with finer, daintier material than John could ever afford.

Every week for a time Amy wrote them of *her dear child*, who was so happy and bright, and who always sent her love to uncle and aunt and cousins, —names which made John grind his teeth together and occasionally sent Agnes off into a fit of rhyming on "Grim Fate's Cruelty," a state of things nearly as hard for John to bear as the loss of Margie. But time and habit heal most wounds, and gradually as the weeks and months went by, he learned to live without her, knowing that she was not dead, and hoping always that it would not be long before something would happen to bring her back to him.

CHAPTER VI.

NANNIE.

It was three and a half years before Margie came again to the farm-house, clad in dainty apparel, with a look of wonder and perplexity in her great brown eyes as she wandered around the house, now scanning her mother curiously, and her sister Isabel, who was wearing one of her old dresses, and then looking earnestly at little Nannie, who was four years old, with the loveliest face a child ever had, but lingering longest by the cradle where a girl baby of a year old was lying. It was the same old cradle in which she had been rocked, and in which she had

often rocked her sisters, and from which she had lifted Nannie only to let her fall the day she went away. The cradle and baby seemed to puzzle her most, but so much pains had been taken to obliterate from her mind all traces of the past that the memory of it was to her as something which comes and goes confusedly, with nothing definite or clear. Everything which money could do had been done for her by Amy, who had conscienscously tried to keep in her mind the uncle and aunt and cousins who lived at the north, and whom she was told she had seen, while many things pertaining to them and their house were described to her in order to account for anything familiar which she might find in her old home. And still it was with fear and trembling that Amy took her there, doing it only because she felt that she owed something to the parents who asked so often that she should come, promising both of them to keep the contract made three and a half years before. And as she was going to Saratoga she stopped for a day and night at the farm-house, which she found better furnished, but nearly as untidy as it had been on the occasion of her last visit. There was a slatternly girl in the kitchen, and Agnes still wore her hair down her back, with knots of blue ribbon about her dress, and her fingers were stained with ink, and her portfolio and manuscript were lying in the bay window, which she called her *sanctum*, and which was curtained off from the sitting-room by a soiled portiere.

She had sold a few of her poems, and felt herself a woman of note, whom it was an honor to know, and she received Amy rather patronizingly than

otherwise, but broke down when she saw the beautiful little girl who hung back shyly at first, both from her and John, and then, as if some wave of memory clearer than the others had swept over her, sprang into her father's arms with something like a shout of joy. But Amy's "Marguerite!" spoken in a tone of half reproof recalled her to herself, and the memory, if it had been there at all, was swept away.

As for John he seemed beside himself for a few moments, laughing immoderately as he looked his daughter over, noticing the richness of her dress, and the way she spoke and moved, so different from the little neglected child he remembered so well, with her smeared face and hands, her faded, torn gown, her tangled hair, and short stockings falling over her shoes. They were in their places now, and her high heeled boots were of the finest French kid, and her dress of some soft material which fitted her perfectly, and her hair was braided in her neck after the fashion of the young girls he had seen at the Mountain House when he carried his early vegetables there. She was not at all like Margie, and he felt a little afraid of her until she sprang into his arms, and laying her cheek against his face, kissed him as she had not kissed her mother. Then she was Margie again—his own little girl—and he might have betrayed himself but for Amy's peremptory "Marguerite!" Releasing the child he hurried out to the orchard where he was at work, one moment resolving to claim his daughter at any cost, and then, as he remembered the ease and luxury with which she was surrounded, and the terrible change it would be for her to come

back to his humble home and scramble along as best she could with little or no care, he said aloud. "No, she's got beyond us. She's like them city girls over to the hotel. She couldn't be happy with Agnes and me, could she?" and he turned to his oxen, who were quietly chewing their cuds and waiting for his "Get up there," to move on. He was in the habit of confiding his troubles to Brindle and Buck, in whose eyes he fancied he found sympathy, and now when Brindle tossed his white horns in the air and partially laid his head against his master's shoulder, John felt that he was answered and went briskly to work.

Half an hour later there came to him a little brown-eyed girl leading Nannie by the hand, and calling out to him in a clear voice, which had in it the sweet southern accent:

"Oh, Uncle John, I remember the oxen. I know I do. I rode once on their backs. May I get on now?"

"That was another Brindle, older than this one," John said; then he lifted her on to the ox and held her while he drove the beasts slowly around the orchard under the apple trees, which were in full bloom, and questioned her of her life in Nashville. Was she very happy there, or would she rather live at the farm-house and ride Brindle every day?

"Oh, no," she said, putting her arm around his neck to steady herself better. "I'd rather live with mamma at Maple Grove; everything is so nice, and I have a pony of my own, and the negroes call me Miss Marguerite, and I've got a piano that sounds a heap better than auntie's. You mustn't tell her, but

I tried it a little with my exercises and it made me laugh, it's so funny. Why does she wear her hair down her back like I do, only her's curls and mine don't? Is she a girl?"

Now he longed to say to her, "No, my child, she is your mother," but he did not, and when next morning she bade him good-bye, there was no thought in her mind that she was other than the daughter of the stately woman who breathed more freely when the farm-house was left behind, and she was safe in the train on her way to Saratoga.

After that brief visit, which brought with it nearly as much pain as pleasure, the weeks and months went rapidly by until Isabel sickened and died, and only Nannie and the baby were left, and when summer came the latter also died suddenly, and Nannie alone remained of the four children whose coming had been unwelcome to their mother, but whose going left her so desolate. In her anguish when her baby died she said it was God's judgment upon her for giving Margie away, and resolved to send for her at once, before Nannie, too, was taken. But she did not send, and Nannie did not die, and after a few months a sturdy little boy, whom she named John, for his father, was lying in the old wooden cradle over which Nannie presided with all the care of a person much older than herself. From the moment she saw her baby brother she constituted herself his nurse as far as she was able, watching him while he slept, rocking him when he showed signs of waking, and sometimes holding him in her lap as a child holds its doll, or a cat carries its kitten. "Little Sunbeam," her father called her, and as she

grew older and he saw how helpful and orderly and thoughtful she was, he predicted that she would one day be a famous housekeeper and relieve her mother of care.

"The dear knows, I hope so," Agnes said, with a sigh, as she finished winding the last yellow wisp of hair around her curling-stick, while Nannie held the glass for her to see herself.

On the plea of nervous prostration, which was then sweeping over the country, and was the name given to shiftlessness and indolence generally, Agnes now sat nearly all day long in the rocking-chair, reading the last Seaside novel, or pouring out her soul in rhymes, while a raw girl in the kitchen wasted more than her wages came to, and Nannie in the front part of the house did what she could to keep things up and make the rooms look tidy.

She was a little creature with delicate features, beautiful blue eyes, a complexion like wax, and her mother's golden hair, which she wore in heavy curls down her back. If Nannie had a spark of vanity, and what girl has not, it lay in her glorious hair, which covered her like a veil and hid what threatened to be a slight deformity, and was perhaps the reason of her slow growth and short stature. Perfect in figure otherwise, one shoulder was higher than the other, and just above it was a small protuberance which ached at times when she was very tired, as she often was, for her willing hands and feet were always busy, and while her mother rocked and read and wrote, she worked and laughed and sang, and filled the old house with so much sunshine that it was not strange her father called her his Sun

beam, and loved her as few daughters have ever been loved by men as quiet and undemonstrative as John Rathburn was.

Margie was not forgotten, but thoughts of her now gave him more pain than pleasure, so completely was her life severed from his. On one plea and another Amy had refrained from bringing her to see him, and he would not have known that she was still alive except for the letters which came from her, stiff and stilted letters mostly, and such as young girls generally write under compulsion to people for whom they care but little. These he never answered, but left that duty to his wife, who finally turned it over to Nannie, between whom and Margie there was at last quite a regular correspondence, each calling the other "My dear cousin," and writing of the things which came into their daily life,—Nannie of the hens and chickens which were hers, of the eggs she sold, and the flowers she tended, the roses, the mignonette and the pansies, some of which she pressed and sent to Margie, who in turn told her of her pony, which she rode with a groom in attendance, her pretty dresses, her lessons in French and music and dancing, and at last of Paris, where she had gone with her mother to be *finished.*

Every year before she went away there had come to the farm-house a box of her cast-off clothes, most of which were unsuitable for Nannie to wear, but which nevertheless she did wear, caring but little if the dresses were too gay and too long and too big for her small body. They were Margie's and must be right, for she was very proud of her cousin, and after she went abroad, very proud of the foreign

letters, especially the one written first in French and then translated into English.

"Oh, if I only knew French, too," she thought, as, with the letter pinned upon the wall where she could look at it, she washed the dinner dishes, repeating over and over to herself, "*Ma chere cousine*," to which she gave anything but the proper pronunciation.

In Nannie's nature there was nothing like envy or repining at her lot, so different from Margie's. She was accustomed to waiting upon her sickly, exacting mother, whose poetry she admired greatly, and who, she thought, was badly treated by the world at large, which did not recognize her genius. She was accustomed to sweep and dust and wash the dishes and lay the cloth and weed the flower beds and look after the poultry, and she sometimes carried eggs and chickens to the Mountain House, where she sold the berries she picked in her father's pasture, and the lilies her brother got for her in the pond when he was old enough to do so. And in doing all this Nannie was comparatively happy, and accepted her life of toil with rare sweetness and cheerfulness, except occasionally when her shoulder ached harder than usual and some ill-natured schoolmate called her a hunchback. Then she would sit down and cry, for although she was not a hunchback she knew that she was not quite like other girls, and that the trouble in her shoulder might increase with time. But Nannie's tears were like April showers and soon passed away, particularly after young Dr. Catheron, who had recently bought a beautiful place near the farm called "The

Pines," examined the bunch and told her that if she were careful it might never trouble her at all, adding with a pleasant smile as he met the great blue eyes lifted so anxiously to his, "and if it does get larger, your wonderful hair will cover it," and the young man laid his hand upon Nannie's crown of gold as he asked if she had ever had a fall which hurt her back.

"Yes," Agnes replied, "when she was a baby her —her cousin Margie dropped her on the floor, but we thought nothing of it at the time. Do you suppose it was that?"

"Possibly," the doctor said, thinking it was more likely the hard work the girl had done ever since she could work at all. To her he said, "Don't worry, and don't lift anything heavy, or get too tired or heated, while you are young, and you'll come out right in time."

Then he went away, while Nannie looked admiringly after him, thinking how grand and tall and handsome he was, and how kind were the eyes which had looked at her, and how pleasant the voice which had called her hair wonderful. Was it really true that she had a heritage of beauty in her hair, she thought, and would Margie think it wonderful if she could see it? If so she was very glad, for she was sure she had no other attraction about her, so utterly void of conceit was this little unselfish country girl, living her monotonous life without a murmur, and only happy when some else was happy because of her.

CHAPTER VII.

SISTER MARGUERITE.

It was fifteen years since Margie went away, and three and a half since she was placed in boarding school in Paris, and among the New England hills it was summer again, and the June sunshine fell soft and warm upon the grass and the lilies and honeysuckles and peonies growing in the yard of the red farm-house. Inside everything was in perfect order, from the nicely blacked stove in the kitchen to the spotless linen on the bed where Agnes lay, or rather reclined upon cushions and pillows, with a blue shawl around her and a sallow look on her faded but still rather pretty face. From nervous prostration she had sunk into a state of confirmed invalidism, or hypochondria, and kept her bed most of the time, having to-day the symptoms of some incurable disease and to-morrow the symptoms of another, as the fancy took her, and each one of which was to take her off in a short time and leave her husband a widower. More than once John was called in from the fields, or up at night to see her die, she always assuring him of her wish that he should fill her place as soon as decency would allow, as she knew how lonesome he would be.. But after the time when he asked her if she thought six months too soon, and suggested that she name her successor that he might be studying her a little, she did not die so often, and he kept to his work in quiet.

Meanwhile Nannie took the entire care of the house with the exception of the washing, which a woman was hired to do.

"I shall be seventeen my next birthday," she had said to her father, "and I do not care to go to school this summer, for I think I know nearly as much as Miss Belknap, who is to teach, and Dr. Catheron says I can have books at any time from his library, and he will tell me about them when he comes to see mother. I wish you'd send the girl away. I'd rather be alone, she is so wasteful and slow. Why, I do believe we shall save at least five dollars a week, which will more than pay the doctor's bill."

And so the girl was dismissed and Nannie installed as maid-of-all-work, managing so well that it sometimes seemed as if there was comparatively nothing to do, while the house had never been so well cared for, or Mr. Rathburn so comfortable as under her administration. And when she was tired she stole away to her room and rested herself with the books which Dr. Catheron loaned her, and which he took care should be of the kind best suited to her taste. On the particular morning of which I am writing, she had risen earlier than usual, and by half past nine was ready for the walk she was to take across the fields to the Pines, Dr. Catheron's beautiful home. The house, which stood on a broad plateau with a succession of grassy terraces sloping to the highway, had been built by an Englishman, who, after lavishing upon it thousands of dollars, grew tired of his expensive toy and offered it for sale for less than half of what it had cost him. It was just at this time that Dr. Guy Catheron, who

was born in Rocky Point, came home from Germany, where he had been perfecting himself in his profession, and great was the joy of the people when they heard that he had bought "The Pines," and was to settle among them. When questioned by Roy Leighton, who owned the Mountain House and spent a part of each summer there, as to the cause why a man of his education and advantages should choose the country rather than the city, he answered that he liked it better, and as he had ample means, and was not dependent upon his profession for support, he chose to live among the people he had known from his boyhood, and to whom he might perhaps do some good. And so the young doctor bought "The Pines," and with it all the furniture of the Englishman, among which were many costly pictures and bits of statuary and bric-a-brac brought from abroad. And then when the fair ones of Rocky Point and Millville, a large manufacturing town about four miles away, were speculating as to the future mistress of the place, the doctor decided the question, for a time at least, by bringing to it his widowed step-mother, who, when she married his father, was a Mrs. Grainger, with a young daughter, Alice, now about twenty-four years old. Of Mrs. Catheron the people of Rocky Point knew but little, as at the time of his second marriage, Judge Catheron had removed to Albany, and they had never seen her until she came to live at "The Pines." Many of the Millvillians and Rocky Pointers had called upon her, but few of these calls were returned, and the general impression was that she was cold and proud

and not at all like the doctor, who had a smile and kind word for every one.

On one of her well days Agnes had called in a smart new bonnet and hired carriage, and by her talk of poets and poetry and her old friend Mr. Tom Carter, whom Mrs. Catheron knew, had tried to impress the lady with a sense of her superiority over her neighbors, and her misfortune in being placed where she was, when she was so eminently fitted to shine in a higher sphere. But her gush was thrown away, and when she left the house it was with the conviction that her time and carriage and new bonnet had been wasted, and that she had probably seen her last of the haughty woman. With Nannie, however, it was different. She neither called socially, nor made any pretensions to equality. She merely went to the Pines for the books the doctor loaned her, and which Mrs. Catheron often helped her to select. Something in Nannie's flower-like face, and quiet, respectful manner, pleased the lady, who occasionally gave her fruit and flowers, and asked her to rest on the cool piazza when the day was hot. Thus it came about that the two were fast friends, and it was with a good deal of alacrity that Nannie set out upon her walk, wondering if she should chance to see Miss Alice Grainger, who, she heard, had been at the Pines for a week or more, and was something of an invalid. The previous day when the doctor's carriage went by with Mrs. Catheron in it, she had caught a glimpse inside of a girlish face framed in masses of chestnut hair, and had said, "that is Alice Grainger, the doctor's step-

sister," and that afternoon when the doctor called to see Mrs. Rathburn, her suspicions were confirmed.

"Yes, Alice was driving with her mother this morning," he said, adding, "she has just come from Philadelphia where she has been—"

Here he checked himself, and nothing more was said of Alice.

But as Nannie went up the long avenue which led from the main road to the plateau on which the house stood, she saw just ahead of her the figure of a young girl who seemed to be sleeping in a sea chair under the shadow of the pines.

"That's Alice," Nannie thought, stepping very cautiously lest she should waken her, and coming so close to her that she could see her distinctly.

How lovely she was with her short curls clustering around her forehead where the blue veins were showing so plainly, and her long lashes shading her thin cheeks on which there was a faint flush of pink, induced by the heat, rather than by health. Her hands, which lay outside the gay afghan, which was spread carelessly over her, were small as a child's and covered with rings, the cost of which Nannie could not guess, although she knew they must be very expensive, as was every article of her dress, from her embroidered muslin wrapper to the satin slippers, which were in sad contrast to Nannie's thick boots, bought for service, and which were at least two sizes too large, for one of Nannie's hobbies was not to be pinched anywhere.

She had seen in the street and at church the young ladies who came to the Mountain House for the summer, and had admired their dresses and their

hats and naturally had tried to fashion her's like them. But the attempt had been a failure and she had accepted that cheerfully as she did everything else. But now, as she stood looking at Alice Grainger, the difference between herself and the girl affected her with a strange sense of disquiet,—Alice, fair and delicate in her soft robes of city make, and she, Nannie, in her country made gown of gingham, too long and too big for her every way,—her last year's hat, which she had trimmed herself, and which was wholly unlike the leghorn flat, with its facing of blue and its wreath of apple blossoms, lying on the pine needles at her feet, and then her hands! They were quite as small as those on the afghan, but so different, and as she held them up she thought how brown they were, and how broken and jagged the nails, for hers were hands which ministered to the comfort of others, and knew nothing of the "*Beaute des Mains*," or the "*Poudre et Pollissoir a-Ongles*," with which Alice was so familiar.

"I ain't like her," Nannie said a little sadly. "How happy she must be, with such nice clothes and such a grand house to live in. I wonder why God made us so different when we are both his children, and I am trying to serve him the best I know how,—trying to do the duty of to-day without reference to to-morrow, as Dr. Catheron told me once when he found me crying because there was sweeping and baking to do the next day, and I was so tired thinking about it. I did not tell him how my back was aching. Ah, me, I believe I should

be very happy if it were not for that place on my shoulder. Please God, don't let it get any larger."

Nannie's high shoulder was the great sorrow of her young life, and as it had recently been troubling her more than usual it was naturally much in her mind, and now as she thought about it she talked aloud, while the figure upon the sea chair began to move. There was a yawn like a weary child, and then the eyes opened and fixed themselves curiously upon Nannie, while the face broke into smiles as the girl raised herself up and said, "So it is you who have been standing here. I knew it was somebody, and dreamed it was Evans. She must have taken advantage of my being asleep to go off, and I am glad, for I hate to be attended and watched as if I were a baby. And now, little girl, who are you? Sit down here, please, and tell me your name."

She drew her feet up from the end of the long chair, but Nannie did not at once sit down. She did not like being called a little girl, although she knew she was short in stature, and she straightened to her full height as she answered, "I am Nannie Rathburn, and live in the red house by the four corners as you go to Melville. I have come to return some books the doctor loaned me."

"Oh, yes," and Alice regarded her with more interest than before. "I know. Guy told me all about you."

"Guy?" Nannie repeated questioningly, and Alice replied, "Yes, *Guy*,—Dr. Catheron, you call him, but I don't. Why should I, when we are engaged?"

"*Engaged!*" and Nannie dropped down upon the

foot of the chair and fanned herself with her straw hat, while her brain seemed turning topsy turvy.

The possibility that Dr. Catheron could ever be more to her than her friend and physician had never entered her mind and never would. He was too high in the social scale for ordinary people, while she was only Nannie Rathburn, a poor farmer's daughter, with something on her person which might grow to a deformity and turn people from her in disgust. And thus it was with no feeling of jealousy that she heard the doctor was engaged. He represented to her all that was best and noblest in a man, and although this was the first time she had met Alice Grainger, her quick intuition told her that it was hardly fitting that she should be Dr. Catheron's wife. The tone of her voice conveyed something of her meaning to Alice, who asked, "Why do you say *engaged* in that way, as if you were surprised?"

"Because—because—" Nannie began,—"because —isn't he your brother?"

"Phoo," and Alice laughed merrily as she adjusted the cushions under her head. "My brother! No, only my step-brother, which does not count. I was fifteen when mother married his father, and Guy was twenty. I am twenty-four now, and he is twenty-nine. He was in college at the time of his father's marriage and was never home much except during his vacations, but that was long enough for me to love him, and just before he went abroad four years ago we were engaged, and when I get well we shall be married. You see they are afraid I have consumption, but I know bet-

ter. No one can feel as well as I do and have about him a mortal disease. I cannot die, I will not die."

Here a paroxysm of coughing seized her, which lasted for some time and left her deadly pale, with her face bathed in perspiration.

"Let me do something for you," Nannie cried, bending over her. "This is dreadful. Are you often so?"

"Ye-es, quite often," Alice said very cheerfully. "I am used to it, and don't mind it much, except as it worries mother and Guy. I was telling you about him. He is so good and kind and so attentive to me, invalid as I am, that I have never felt the least bit jealous of anybody except—"

She hesitated a moment and then continued: "You won't mind my saying it, will you, because I want to ask you about her?"

Nannie had not the slightest idea what she meant, but answered that she should not mind at all, and Alice went on: "I mean your sister, whom Guy saw abroad."

"My sister!" Nannie repeated, in great astonishment. "You mean my cousin. Did Dr. Catheron see her in Europe? He never told me."

"No, I mean your *sister* Marguerite, whom Mrs. James Rathburn adopted when she was a little girl," Alice persisted, while Nannie was just as stout in her denial.

"Margie is not my sister. She is my cousin. I have no sister," she said, but her voice began to tremble and her heart to beat rapidly, for something she could not define was saying to her that this she was hearing might be true.

"It is strange you never knew it, and *I* am afraid I have done mischief," Alice said, as she saw how white Nannie grew, and how she trembled as if she were in a chill.

"Tell me all you know. It is time I heard it," Nannie replied, and something in her voice compelled Alice to go on.

"It is not much," she said, "only when Guy came home and talked of settling in Rocky Point, he and mamma got to speaking of the people whom Guy used to know, and your family was mentioned with others, and he said he saw Marguerite Rathburn in Paris, and she was the most elegant looking girl he had ever met, with such a fine figure and beautiful eyes, and then I did feel a little annoyed for Guy seldom speaks of any one as he did of her. Of course I asked about her, and he told me she was given to Mrs. James Rathburn as her own when she was a little girl four years old, I believe, and now I think of it he did say that you did not know it, and here I have stupidly let it out. Guy will never forgive me, though I don't see why you shouldn't know. Oh, Nannie, oh, please, don't—don't cry like that," she continued, as Nannie began to sob as if her heart would break, while the tears ran like rain down her flushed cheeks.

Getting up from her reclining posture, Alice sat down by Nannie and putting her arm around her, tried to soothe and quiet her. But Nannie only said, "No, no, Miss Grainger, please don't talk. Let me cry till I am through."

"But I don't understand what you are crying

about. Wouldn't you rather have a sister than a cousin?"

"Yes, oh, yes, but somehow it hurts me, and I can't tell you why," Nannie said, feeling wholly unable to explain why the knowledge that Marguerite was her sister should affect her so and strike her with a sense of injustice done to her by some one. She had so longed for a sister to share her girlish joys and griefs, and had more than once so expressed herself to her mother, who had known and made no sign.

What did it mean, and why was her sister given away, and why had she been taught to call her cousin, and did Margie know? Nannie kept asking herself, as she sat with her face buried in her hands hearing little that Alice was saying to her, but enduring afresh, as it seemed to her in those few moments, all the longing for young girl companionship which she had sometimes felt, and all the loneliness of her home, her room, her bed, in which many a night she had fallen asleep thinking of Margie, and wishing she could see her.

"I must go now and ask mother if it is true, and why she did it and never told me," she said at last, and withdrawing herself from Alice's encircling arm, she walked rapidly away just as a plain, middle-aged woman, whom Alice called *Evans*, came hurrying up, with a look of disapprobation on her face, when she saw her young mistress' familiarity with a girl who wore a gingham dress and white apron, and was evidently of the working class.

CHAPTER VIII.

NANNIE AND DR. CATHERON.

Dr. Catheron had been to Millville that morning, and as he entered the avenue leading to his house on his return, he saw Nannie coming swiftly down the walk, her hat in her hand, her long hair flying about her face, and herself evidently in a state of great excitement.

"Why, Nannie," he said, dismounting from his horse as she came up to him, "what is the matter, and why are you running so this hot morning? What has happened?"

"Everything," Nannie replied, and seizing him by the arm, she continued, "Dr. Catheron, why have you never told me that I had a sister? Why has no one told me, and is it true?"

Dr. Catheron had always known of the relationship existing between Marguerite and Nannie, and had known, too, of Mr. and Mrs. Rathburn's wish that the knowledge of it should be withheld from their children, and for a moment he did not answer Nannie, who stood before him panting and breathless.

"Sit down there," he said at last, pointing to a bench under a tree at a little distance. Then, tying his horse to a sapling, he took a seat beside her and asked, "Who told you that you had a sister?"

"Miss Grainger," Nannie replied "and she says you saw her in Paris and that she is very beautiful,

—and— Oh, Dr. Catheron, why didn't you tell me? Why didn't mother tell me? Why has no one told me? I should have been so much happier all these years with a sister to love, even though she did not live with me. Tell me what you know."

"It is not much," Dr. Catheron said, "and I am sorry Alice was so indiscreet."

"But why was she indiscreet? Why shouldn't I know?" Nannie demanded vehemently, and the doctor replied, "I am sure I cannot tell you why you should not, and all I know is this. When I was a lad of twelve or more and living in Rocky Point, I remember hearing that Mrs. James Rathburn had adopted your sister Margie, and that she did not wish her to know that she was not her own, and that, I suppose, is the reason your mother has never told you. But it is strange that none of your school friends have ever let it out. Have they never hinted it to you?"

"Never, to my knowledge," Nannie said, "or if they did they were not understood. Nor is it very strange that they didn't tell me, for I have no intimate friends among them as some girls have. I have always staid at home, except when I went to school, and then I used to run as fast as I could to get there in time and run home the minute we were dismissed, because there was so much to do. It was hard sometimes to go away from the play, but I had to, as there was no one to see to mother. I wish I had known. I should have been happier. Does Margie know?"

Nannie's voice was very pathetic, and her long lashes were wet with tears as she looked up at the

doctor, who said, "I should think not, as her aunt is so anxious to keep the knowledge from her. She is very beautiful."

"Yes," Nannie sobbed. "I saw her once when I was too young to remember her. But two years ago she sent me her photograph, which is lovely. Tell me about her, please. When did you see her, and what did she say?"

"I have not much to tell," the doctor replied. "I was in Paris a few weeks before I came home a year ago, and saw something of society in the American colony, where Mrs. Rathburn is quite a leader. She has apartments just off the Champs d' Elysees, near the Bois de Boulogne, and entertains a great deal. I met her at the house of an acquaintance and was invited to lunch with her, but could not go. I saw your sister, however, at a ball given by a French Marquis and was then presented to her. But she had so many admirers around her, that I, a stranger, stood no chance whatever, and could only watch her at a distance, as partner after partner claimed her for a dance."

"How did she look? What did she wear?" Nannie asked, with a true woman's curiosity, and the doctor replied, "I can tell you better how she looked than what she wore. She is tall, with a graceful, willowy figure, and carries herself very proudly and erect. She has beautiful brown eyes and a brilliant complexion, and when she laughs she shows two pretty dimples which add to her attractiveness. As to her dress, I think it was some pinkish stuff, with a good deal of soft lace. But I really remember very little about it. I was more inter-

ested in her because I knew she was from Rocky Point, and felt in a way related to her."

"And you didn't talk with her?" Nannie asked, and he replied, "No. How could I with a dozen or more fellows crowding around her? I doubt if she knew she was even introduced to me, I was of so little account."

"Oh-h," Nannie said involuntarily. "Then Miss Grainger needn't be jealous of her."

"Alice jealous of her," the doctor exclaimed, "what do you mean?" And without stopping to consider what she was saying, Nannie began:

"She told me you and she were engaged—" but got no farther, as the doctor interrupted her so quickly with, "Alice told you that?" while his face flushed with what seemed to Nannie a look of annoyance, and she hastened to explain by saying, "She was talking of you, and how kind you were, and somehow it came out naturally enough. I hope you don't mind my knowing it. I shall keep it to myself if you wish it."

"It does not matter," the doctor said. "If she told you she will tell others."

It was a strange way to speak of one's betrothed, Nannie thought, and she looked curiously at the doctor, who seemed so abstracted and sat striking his riding whip against a flowering current bush growing near him. After a moment's silence Nannie said, "And you do not think Margie knows she is my sister?"

"No, I am sure she does not," was his answer, while Nannie continued hotly, "If I supposed she did, and made no sign, I should hate her!

I am going home now to see mother and get to the bottom of the matter," and she sprang to her feet and began to put on her hat, while the doctor wondered to see her so moved when he had heretofore found her so quiet and gentle, and as he had sometimes thought almost apathetic.

He had been interested in her from the first time he was called to visit her mother, and when he saw how overworked she was and how little sunshine there seemed to be in her life, he had pitied her and tried in various ways to be kind to her, and was very sorry now for this which was troubling her so much.

"Why did Alice tell her that, or anything," he thought, just as Alice herself appeared around a turn in a winding path, leaning upon Evans, and shaking her finger playfully at him as she cried, "So I have caught you both, you bad boy and naughty girl. I thought I heard your voices and made Evans come with me. What were you talking about?"

"My sister," Nannie answered, while Dr. Catheron got up and going to Alice said, "Are you sure you are not imprudent to walk so far as this?"

"Yes, quite sure, and I wish you and mamma wouldn't coddle me so much and make me think I am ill. Do I look so?" and she turned appealingly to Nannie, who thought her the loveliest creature she had ever seen and wondered if Margie could be half as fair as this beautiful girl over whom the doctor was bending with what seemed like a caress, and whose sparkling face was lifted so lovingly to his.

It was the first bit of love-making Nannie had ever

seen, and it smote her with a kind of pang, bringing again into sharp contrast her own self with this petted favorite of fortune.

"For her everything, for me nothing," she thought, and then with a feeling that she might be in the way of the lovers, she said good-morning, and walked rapidly down the avenue and out into the road, where she was soon out of sight.

"She is a pretty little girl," Alice said, laying her head upon the doctor's arm.

"Yes," he answered, "and as good as she is pretty, but I am sorry you told her of her sister. Why did you, Alice?"

There was reproof in his voice and Alice felt it, and her lip quivered as she replied, "I don't know why I did. I meant no harm, neither do I see why she shouldn't know it. I told her, too, that we were engaged, and that seemed to surprise her nearly as much as the news about ner sister. It can't be that she has any designs on you."

"Nannie,—designs on me! Never!" Dr. Catheron answered quickly, while Alice continued, "I'm glad of that, although of course you could never think of a girl in her station of life, or of any girl, I hope. It would kill me if you did."

She was fingering the buttons of his coat as she talked, and the doctor took her hand in his and said, "You need have no fears for me, Alice, and I wish you to be very kind to Nannie. She has but little to make her happy."

And then very briefly he told her of Nannie's home and her mother, and of the many steps Nannie's tired feet took every day for others—of the

trouble with her back, which might or might not become a serious matter as she grew older. And Alice, who was all impulse, became greatly interested and rapidly formed at least a dozen plans for Nannie's future good, one of which was to send her at once to Paris where her back could be attended to by physicians, or dressmakers, and the other to do all she could for the girl and to treat her, as she expressed it, "as if she were my equal."

CHAPTER IX.

NANNIE GETS AT THE BOTTOM OF IT.

Mrs. Agnes Rathburn was in bed with her pencil in hand and her portfolio before her, while under the mattress was a small hand glass, which told her when her attitude was becoming and such as that of a poetess should be. She knew that Dr. Catheron was to call that morning on his return from Millville, and she had posed beautifully for him, and poured into his ears a long list of symptoms and ailments which would have killed her years before had she had but a tithe of them. And the doctor had listened as in duty bound, and felt her pulse and told her when she complained of her head that she must not use it too much, and had given her something in two glasses which he knew could not harm, her, and then had gone away thinking to himself, "What a crank that woman is."

Meanwhile the crank, sure that she had made a

favorable impression as a superior and pretty woman, had resumed her head work, which was manufacturing a poem entitled "The Hunger of the Brain." A young editor had recently come to Millville and set up a paper in opposition to the long established *Millville News*, and as he must fill its columns with something, he had accepted several of *Senga's* articles with a promise to pay as soon as he was able to do so. The previous day he had sent her a note asking if she could furnish something for the next week's issue, and she was working away on "The Hunger of the Brain," but could get no further than,

"Oh, the weary, weary longing and hungering of the brain,"
The sighing for the something which can never come again.

Just what that something was she didn't know, unless it were Tom Carter, who had become a judge, and of whom she often found herself thinking, or rather thinking of all she had missed when she discarded him, although in her heart she knew that she preferred John, who humored her as no other man would ever have done. In her rhapsody over the "hungry brain" she had forgotton the bread which Nannie had left in her charge, and which she had put into the oven just before posing for the doctor. But she never thought of it again until the fumes of something burning reached her from the kitchen and brought her back to the fact that if the bread had been spoiled there would be hungry stomachs as well as hungry brains in the house at dinner time. Closing her portfolio with a sigh, she was about going to see to it when Nannie came

hurrying in, her face flushed, and her eyes flashing as Agnes had never seen them flash before.

"Why, Nannie," Mrs. Rathburn began, "what ails you, and why were you gone so long, when I am feeling so wretchedly? The doctor thinks there is something the matter with my head, I'm so dizzy, and I'm afraid the bread is burned. Pray go and see to it, or we shall have none for dinner?"

"Never mind the bread, mother, or dinner either. I want you to tell me why you have never let me know that Margie was my sister," Nannie answered, throwing off her hat and confronting her mother like a young Nemesis.

The shock was too much for Mrs. Rathburn, who sank back among her pillows, limp and faint and speechless for a moment. Like Dr. Catheron, she had often wondered why no one had ever revealed the secret to Nannie, or her son, and when the former was younger, ten or twelve years of age, she half hoped that she might hear of it, as it would be a comfort to herself, she thought, if she could speak of Margie as her daughter to some one, for her husband seldom mentioned her, and for any sign he ever gave, might have ceased to care for her. But as Nannie grew older and developed in her nature a strong aversion to everything which was not perfectly open and true, she was glad that she did not know, and now when Nannie's question came so suddenly upon her, she was so startled that for a moment she could not speak. But Nannie could, and she went on rapidly: "I know all about it. Miss Grainger at the Pines told me first, and then I asked Dr. Catheron, who has seen her in Paris. He

admitted it and said you gave her away when I was a baby, but why you did it he didn't know. Oh, mother, why did you do it? Why did you give away your own daughter and leave me all alone? I should have been so much happier all these years with a sister to love and to love me, and it has sometimes been so dreary, with you sick so much. Oh, I can't bear it," and putting her head down upon the foot of the bed, Nannie cried bitterly.

"Oh, Nannie, don't cry like that. You make me wish I were dead," Mrs. Rathburn said, sliding herself down so as to put her hand on the sobbing girl's head. "Listen, and I will tell you. We were so poor, and there was a heavy mortgage on the farm coming due in a few days, and nothing to pay it with, and there were three of you, Margie, Isabel who died, and yourself, all babies as it were, and my health so bad, and your aunt Amy came and begged so hard for Margie and offered us money, and——"

Here she was interrupted by Nannie, who drew herself away, and standing up as tall as a little girl like her could stand, said, "And so you *sold* my sister!"

The voice was not Nannie's at all, it was so sharp and full of reproach, and Mrs. Rathburn began to cry as she replied, "You can call it that if you like. We gave Margie to your aunt Amy, who in return gave us some money——"

"*How much?*" Nannie demanded, and her mother replied, "Five thousand dollars, and we were never to let Margie know that she was not Amy's child. It was a fortune to us, and tided us

over all our difficulties. Without it the farm must have been sold and we have been homeless. Don't look at me that way, Nannie. We did it for the best, your father and I."

At the mention of her father, Nannie started as if she were stung. She had more respect for her father than for her mother,—more faith in him,—for although she loved her mother dearly and was very proud of her, she had come to know her little foibles and weaknesses perfectly, charging them, however, to her poor health, but trusting her father most. That he had had any part in the sale of her sister, as she termed it, had not entered her mind until his name was mentioned, when she gasped, "And father—was he willing? did he do it, too?"

"Do what? and what is it all about, and why is there no sign of dinner, and what is that awful smell?" came in a heavy, masculine voice close behind Nannie, who, turning, saw her father standing beside her.

He was not feeling well that morning, and as the day was very hot he had come from his work earlier than usual, without waiting for the towel which was Nannie's token that his meals were ready. During the last few years Mr. Rathburn had changed more than his wife. The stoop between his shoulders was more perceptible, and his hair was iron grey. He had grown more taciturn and seldom smiled except on Nannie, who was the very apple of his eye,—the one being who added much brightness to his life. Of his son John, or Jack, as he was called, to distinguish him from his father, he was fond in his

way, but as the two were much alike,—undemonstrative and quiet,— they were never on very intimate terms, and would frequently work together for hours without speaking to each other.

"We ain't a very sociable lot," Jack once said to Nannie, his confidant in everything. "But father makes it up talking to himself."

"Talking to himself," Nannie repeated, and Jack continued, "Yes, ever so much, though what about I don't know. I once heard him say, 'I wouldn't do it again for twice the sum,' and when I asked who he was talking to, he told me to mind my business. I guess he's a little cracked."

To his wife John Rathburn was always kind and indulgent, humoring her fancies, and, like Nannie, making excuses for her on the plea of her ill health and shattered nerves. He always went directly to her room when he came from his work, and on this day did so as usual, noticing, as he passed through the kitchen, that there were no signs of dinner, and that the air was full of smoke from the burning bread.

"Aggie is having a bad spell. I wonder what she's got this time," he thought, but was not prepared for the scene which met his eyes.

His wife at the foot of the bed in what looked like an imploring attitude before Nannie, who was asking, "And father? Was he willing? Did he do it, too?"

At sight of him Agnes began to cry, and stretching her arms towards him, said, "Oh, John, I'm so glad you have come to help me explain to Nannie, who says we *sold* Margie, her sister. It's dreadful. Tell her how it was, and how sorry we were and that you went after her in the morning, but Amy

was gone, and we had promised not to let Margie know she was ours. Oh—my head," and Agnes fell back upon the bed white and exhausted, while John steadied himself against a chair and asked Nannie in his deliberate way, "What was up."

She told him very rapidly what she had heard, and finished by saying, "How could you? How could you sell my sister and leave me alone,—oh, so alone I feel, now that I know."

With frequent interruptions from his wife, Mr. Rathburn repeated every particular of the story, blaming himself most, as he always did, and dwelling at length upon Agnes' regret and sorrow when she found Margie had really gone. And as he talked, Nannie softened a good deal. It was not quite so heartless a transaction after all, and she began to arrange her mother's pillows and to pull the shawl around her shoulders, for she complained of being chilly and finally went off into hysterics, which took all her husband's and Nannie's efforts to quiet. At last, however, she grew calm, and drank the hot tea Nannie brought her, and finally fell asleep, while John sat down alone to the hasty dinner Nannie improvised for him. Nannie could not eat. Her mind was too full of her sister, and she plied her father with questions concerning her and her last visit to the farm-house.

"And she kissed me, you say?" she asked, "and led me by the hand in the lane? I must have been almost four years old, and it seems to me I remember her. Didn't she ride on old Brindle in the orchard?"

"Yes, she rode on old Brindle," her father replied,

with a lump in his throat as he thought of that bright day, and the brighter little girl who had ridden on Brindle's back under the apple trees in the orchard. "Brindle and Buck were young critters then," he said, but did not add that the pampered, worn-out Brindle, who in the summer roamed at will in the best pasture land on the farm, unused and unyoked, and who in the winter was fed and petted in his stall, was kept for the sake of that day, and the little girl who, by riding upon him, had made him too sacred a thing to kill, although his work was done.

In almost every human heart there is a bit of sentiment or romance, and the keeping of Brindle was John's. Buck had broken his leg and been shot and buried with as much honor as dumb beasts usually get, but Brindle was kept, and after his dinner was over and he had kissed his wife, who was now awake and dissolved in tears, which she said she could not restrain when she thought how Nannie had looked at her as she accused her of selling Margie, he went out to the enclosure where Brindle was lying in the shade, and bending over the dumb beast, patted his sides and said, "It's out now, old feller. Nan knows about Margie, just as we do. You remember her, don't you?"

In the expectation of something to eat, Brindle put up his nose, just as Nannie came up. She had seen her father's action, and with her quick intuition guessed why the old ox was kept long after her brother Jack said he should be killed, as he ate more than two oxen ought to eat and was of no earthly use. Going swiftly to her father, she said,

"Oh, father, I guess I know why you keep Brindle and pet him so. It's because Margie rode on him that day she was here, and I am glad now that you do. I shall tell Jack not to fret any more over what he eats. Good old Brindle," and she caressed the white horns of the ox for the sake of Margie, who had probably forgotten long ago that there was ever such an animal,

"Brindle and I have done a great many hard days' work together, and I never found him a shirk; he always pulled ahead of Buck," Mr. Rathburn answered indifferently, not willing to admit his weakness. Then he went on more rapidly, "Nan, I'm glad you know about Margie, and wonder you never heard it before. I have wanted to tell you, but didn't for fear you'd let it out, and you must keep it to yourself, and not even tell Jack?"

"Oh, father!" Nannie began quickly, "I must tell him. I can't talk to him any more of Margie as if she were just our cousin, when I know she is our sister. It would be a lie, and that I can neither act nor tell."

"Well, go it then. I know how that feels, for I have been one big lie all these years," Mr. Rathburn said, and then added: "But, Nan, if I'se you, I wouldn't hector my mother any more about it. She's been sorry enough, and we were awful poor and needed the money, and— Well, she's nervous and weakly and can't bear things as you and me, who are strong and well."

Here he stopped, struck suddenly as he had never been before with the fragile appearance of the girl looking so earnestly at him. He always

knew she was small for her years, but she was so bright and active and cheery, and her hands and feet rendered so willing service to all around her that he had never really thought that she, too, might be "weakly," and working beyond her strength. But it smote him now like a blow, for to lose little Nannie would be to lose all the real brightness of his life.

"Nan," he said, taking hold of her slender wrist, "are you sick, you look so peaked and pale?"

"No," she replied, brightening at once, "I'm all right. It's the heat, and my crying about Margie, and—and—" she hesitated a little, dreading to put into words the fear which was always haunting her somewhat, and had been increasing of late; "—and, father, that bunch on my shoulder aches some, and I'm afraid it's growing, and I don't want to get deformed, and if Margie knew she was my sister I might, perhaps, go to Paris where she is, and have it straightened. The doctors there can do everything, I've heard."

It was a sweet, pleading, tearful face which looked at Mr. Rathburn, but it clouded when he said decidedly, "No, no, you must not tell Margie, of all others in the world. That was the contract. None of us must tell her. She is never to know until your aunt Amy chooses to let her, and don't worry about the back. You've lifted too much lately. I saw you this morning with a big pail of water, but Jack and I will see to that, and I'll have Dr. Catheron take you in hand. He's as good any day as a dozen Paris quacks. Don't cry, Nan. It's hard lines for us all, and big man as I am I kind of depend upon

you to keep me up. If you break down, I shall. That bunch don't grow an atom, and if it does your hair will cover it. You've got pretty hair, Nannie, —like your mother's when she was a girl. There, there, don't cry."

He was stroking her curls and patting her cheeks, while Nannie cried as if her heart would break. The hope of help from Margie, which had suddenly sprung up, was swept away, and she went sadly back to the house, where she found her mother deep in the mysteries of her poem, whose title she had changed from "The Hunger of the Brain," to "The Hunger of the Heart, for the Child that we Lost," which child might to the world mean either little Isabel or Katie, but which to her meant Margie, and so much pathos and real sentiment did she put into the article that the delighted editor, when he received it next day, sent her five dollars, and pronounced it the best thing she had ever written.

CHAPTER X.

NANNIE AND JACK.

While Mrs. Rathburn was finishing her poem, Nannie went up to her room and bathed her head, which was aching so hard, while occasionally a pain like the sharp prick of a needle darted through her shoulder, the natural result of her unusual excitement. But she did not impute it to that, and only thought with a sickening dread of what the future

might hold for her, and realized vaguely now strong for a few moments had been the hope that through Margie she might be helped. She had heard of plaster jackets and casts and various devices for straightening weak backs, and had fancied that only in Paris were they to be found in perfection, and Margie was there and would help her, if she knew.

"But she will never know, for I must not tell her. Nobody can help me, and I almost know it is growing, or it wouldn't ache as it does to-day," she said, as she removed her dress, and taking a hand glass and standing before the mirror she examined the ailing shoulder, which to her disordered imagination looked nearly as large as a half bushel, although it was really not much higher than the other and the defect was entirely concealed by her hair when it was down.

This she had twisted into a knot when she removed her dress, but she let it down again, and as it fell about her she was conscious of a thrill of pride in her hair, which both Dr. Catheron and her father had said was beautiful. But with this feeling there came a pang of remorse for the pride, and a fear lest God might punish her for it by making her a hunchback. Twice she had been called that,—once by a schoolmate and once by Jack, when he was angry, and she had writhed under the name just as she did now at the thought of it.

"Please God," she said with quivering lips, "don't let me be that, and I'll never curl my hair again as long as I live."

Poor little morbid Nannie, she was not the first person, who, from the effects of a diseased body, has

groped blindly in the dark, with a mistaken idea that the good which God has given must be thrust aside lest it turn into a curse, or has tried to bribe him by taking up a cross he never meant him to bear. And this was just what Nannie was doing as she straightened her wavy hair and bound it in a net, and thought with a kind of grim satisfaction that she was mortifying her flesh and making herself very ugly in doing it. When her toilet was completed, she took from a little box where she kept her few treasures, a photograph which Margie had sent her two years ago, and which she examined with very different feelings from those she had experienced when she first received it. Then it was Margie her cousin, but now it was Margie her sister, whose great brown eyes met hers with a smile in them, as if they would say, "Yes, I am Margie, and you are Nannie, my sister."

"How lovely she is," Nannie thought, as she scrutinized the picture, which was that of a tall, graceful girl in riding habit and hat, standing by a horse from which she had evidently just dismounted, for one of her hands was grasping the pommel of the saddle, while the other held up her long skirt.

Her face was very bright and beautiful, with, however, something proud and aristocratic in its expression, and Nannie detected the pride and the culture, and glancing at herself in the mirror, said sadly, "I am not like her, and never can be, she's so grand and straight and tall, and I'm so small and thin, and—and— May be I shall grow crooked and deformed,' she added, with a quiver in her voice,

but a hope in her heart that inasmuch as she had put up her hair and was thus waging war against her vanity, the calamity might be averted. Then she thought of Jack, and wondered what he would say and when he would be home. There was a circus in Millville that day, and Jack had gone to it with some other boys of his age, and as he was to walk home and the circus would not be over until five o'clock she could not reasonably expect him until six or later.

"I'll have supper early and go and meet him," she thought, and putting the picture in her pocket, she went down stairs, finding her mother asleep and a brood of young chickens stalking about the kitchen in search of any stray crumbs which might be on the floor, while the old hen stood clucking to them on the threshold.

Shooing out the chickens and kindling the fire, Nannie soon had supper on the table, and surprised her father by calling him an hour earlier than usual.

"I thought you would be hungry, you had so little dinner, and then I want to get the chores done in time to meet Jack," she explained, as she poured her father's tea and prepared her mother's supper upon a little tray.

Mr. Rathburn guessed why she was so anxious to see Jack, but said nothing, and only looked curiously at her, wondering what there was so queer about her. It never occurred to him that it was her hair which gave her the look of a little nun, as she busied herself with the dishes when supper was over, and then, taking her sunbonnet, started down

the road just as the clock struck six. As she reached the top of the hill and came near to the pond where the lilies grew so thickly in their season, she saw her brother coming alone in the distance, and sat down on the stone wall under a butternut tree to wait for him. Jack was a brown-haired, brown-eyed, brown-skinned boy, with a good face and a great deal of common sense, which he inherited from his father. He was never very communicative, except to Nannie, whom he loved with all the strength of his boy nature, notwithstanding that he frequently teased and worried her. His father had given him twenty-five cents with which to buy his lunch, and he had spent it all for Nannie, investing twenty cents of it for a *diamond* pin, a finger ring and some bangles which he had bidden off at auction, and the other five cents for a pair of fancy hair pins which he thought she might like. And with these valuables in his pocket and a very empty stomach, he was coming on at a rapid pace, and wondering what Nan would have for supper, when he spied her under the tree, and soon came up to her.

"Hallo, Nan," he said, seating himself by her side, "and so you've come to meet me. Whew! Ain't it hot! I hope you've got something good to eat. I'm hungry as a bear, but oh my, haven't I had fun. I wish you'd been there to see that clown. I almost split my sides laughing, I wish you could have seen him. But I have brought you something. See here;" and he produced the diamond pin and the ring and the bangles and the hair pins, and laid them one by one in her lap. "All for a quarter."

he said. "And isn't this a beauty?" holding up the pin. "Not real, of course. You can't expect a real for double that price, but the man said half the diamonds were shams and he *guaranteed* this to look good a year or more. Try the ring, Nan. By hokey, it just fits; that's lucky."

Jack was full of the circus and his fine bargains, while Nannie was full of Margie. She knew the pin was glass and the ring brass and the bangles pewter or tin, but it was kind in Jack to think of her, and she thanked him in an absent kind of way which attracted his attention more than her tired, drooping attitude had done. Looking inquiringly at her he saw how pale she was, and said, "What is it, Nan, that you seem so wilted like? Anything up at the house? Has mother some new disease?"

Nannie could keep it no longer, and began at once:

"Jack, I came to tell you. Something has happened which will surprise you as it did me, and make you glad, too, I guess. You and I have a new sister!"

"A—new—sister! Great guns!" and Jack leaped from the stone wall as if he had been shot. "A sister! A baby! That *is* a jolly go. When did it happen, and what does father think of it?"

The mistake was so unexpected and ludicrous that Nannie laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks, while Jack kicked at the gnarled roots of the butternut tree and kept saying, "By ginger, if that ain't funny, that mother should have a baby!"

"Jack," she said, as soon as she could command her voice, "are you crazy? It's a grown up

sister. It's Margie, who we thought was our cousin, but she is not. Aunt Amy adopted her years ago, before you were born, or I could remember her, and she is never to know that she isn't Aunt Amy's child. That was the bargain. But she's our own sister, and I'm so glad, ar'n't you?"

Then very briefly she told him the story as she had heard it from her father and mother, and asked him again if he were not glad. Jack didn't know whether he were glad or not. In fact he cared very little about it, he said, and he didn't see what difference it could make to them so long as Margie was never to know it.

"But we know," Nannie said, "and although it makes me feel lonesome for her, knowing she is my sister and we might have been so much to each other all these years, I am proud of her, she is so handsome and such a lady, with everybody admiring her, Dr. Catheron said. You remember the picture she sent me two years ago? I have it in my pocket. Look at it and see if she isn't lovely."

She held up the photograph, at which Jack looked rather indifferently. He cared very little for girls anyway, and nothing whatever for the class which Margie represented, and which he had often seen at the Mountain House when he went there with lilies and roses and berries, as he often did in the summer. They were a *stuck up lot* who called him "boy" and beat him down on his lilies, and this tall, and graceful girl in the picture looked just like them, only more so, and when Nannie asked him the third time what he thought of her, he answered, "Oh, she's well enough, and looks like all the big

bugs. But that horse, oh, my, he's an old cob compared with what they had at the circus."

His mind was evidently fuller of the circus than of Margie, and Nannie could have boxed his ears she was so disgusted with his indifference, and she did clutch his arm tightly as she said, "But, Jack, don't you know, she's our sister? Nothing can change that, and you ought to be so glad, even if she never knows."

"Why, Nan," Jack replied, shaking himself free from her. "Don't get so mad and stick your nails clear into a feller if she is our sister. I didn't know you were such a little cat. Margie is well enough, I s'pose, but she ain't like us, and wouldn't care a dime for us if she did know, and as for beauty, she can't compare with you."

"Oh, Jack," Nannie cried, flushing a little with pleasure at the compliment. "Compare with me! Why, I'm nothing beside her but an under-sized country girl, with—with—"

Here the bugbear which shadowed Nannie's life presented itself to her mind again, and she stammered out—"with the possibility of being deformed some day."

"Deformed!" Jack repeated. "What do you mean?"

"Have you forgotten my high shoulder?" Nannie asked. "I'm always thinking about it, and more lately because it aches so much, and I think it's growing. Look, Jack, and tell me true, if it isn't."

She turned her back to him, and with a hasty glance, Jack said: "Growing? No. I can't see anything but an all-fired great wrinkle in your dress

when you hutch up your shoulders; and if there was a bunch as big as my head your hair would hide it. I say, Nan, what have you got your curls twisted up in a wad for, making you look like a grandmother. Your hair is so pretty, and I like to see it down."

"Please don't say that, Jack," Nannie answered very sadly, "I must wear my hair up, for I think it is a snare."

"A *snare*!" Jack said. "A snare for what?" and then Nannie told all her morbid fancies, while Jack began to laugh at her.

"Look here, Nan," he said, "don't be a fool. If God didn't want your hair to curl, why did he make it so curly? And don't you think he has something better to do than to torment a poor little girl like you by sticking a great lump on her back just because she let her hair hang down? I thought you'd more sense than that. Pull off that net, and don't make a guy of yourself."

He was tugging awkwardly at the hair-pins as he talked, and with Nannie's assistance her hair was soon falling down to her waist, transforming her whole appearance, and with the setting sun shining upon it making Jack think of the pictures he had seen of angels.

"Now you are a stunner," he said, "and Margie can't hold a candle to you in her long gown and man's hat, and I wouldn't exchange you for forty like her. Of course she feels big. Why shouldn't she, brought up as she has been to think folks like us *dirt?*"

"Oh, Jack, don't talk like that," Nannie pleaded.

"Margie isn't to blame for the way she was brought up, and almost everybody would say it was better than our way; and sometimes I think it is, too. Have you never wanted things different, when you see such people as Dr. Catheron and the great folks who come to the Mountain House?"

"Why, yes," Jack answered, after a little reflection. "I'd like to have mother well, so as to help you more, and not be in bed so much and scribble about a robin under the window, and her only boy, that's me, and a lot more stuff that isn't worth shucks; and when I see the boys of my age over at the Mountain House doing nothing but wear their store clothes and play croquet and lawn tennis, and ride horseback, I wonder how it would seem to be like them and not work like a dog all day long; and when I read of all the fine things there are in the world, I wish I was rich, so I could see the big Pyramid and that great stone thing, I forget its name, which has been sitting near it thousands of years, and which Dr. Catheron, who has been there, says Moses saw, and Joseph, too—and perhaps the Saviour, when he was a little boy, in Egypt. And I'd like to go to the North Pole, or somewhere off there, and see the midnight sun, and the place in Rome where the wild beasts used to rush in and tear the men all to pieces. But, pshaw! What's the use to talk this nonsense, when I know I shall most likely always stay on the farm just as father has, and grow gray and crooked like him. But as long as you are with me, Nan, I don't mind. It would be awfully lonesome without you."

Never before had Jack shown his real self to his

sister, who had only known him as a teasing, wayward, don't-care sort of boy, with no thought for his personal appearance except as it pleased her, and no aspirations for anything better than the quiet country life he was leading. And now that she knew there was something in his nature which answered to hers, she felt drawn nearer to him, and laying her head upon his shoulder, she said, softly, "Jacky, if I only had the money, I'd give it all to you, and you should see the Pyramids and the Sphynx,—that's its name. Margie has been there. Don't you remember she was in Egypt a year ago last winter, and although she will never know who we really are, I have a feeling that through her good will come to us, and that maybe you and I will one day stand by the Pyramids and go up the Nile." Jack laughed derisively, and rising to his feet, said, "You are as luny as mother. We shall never see the Pyramids, nor that other critter, nor go up the Nile, nor anywhere. We shall just stay here and delve together till you are married, and then I shall dig on alone the best I can."

"Married! Oh, Jack, I marry! Never!" and Nannie spoke with great earnestness. "Who would want me, a plain country girl and almost a dwarf? Nobody! And whom would I marry if he did want me? Nobody! I wouldn't mind being loved very much by somebody, but not in a marrying way; that is impossible, and never enters my head. Margie is the one to marry."

"Oh, bother Margie. You've got her on the brain bad, and I tell you she don't care a picayune for us, and I'll bet my head she'd want to hang her-

self if she knew she was our sister and had to come back to us. But let's go home. I'm hungrier than a bear."

It needed the matter-of-fact Jack to bring Nannie down from her flights of fancy, but her face was very sober as she walked by his side back to the house, he whistling a part of a tune he had caught at the circus that afternoon, and she thinking of Margie and wondering where she was that June evening, and if she would shrink from them and their surroundings, if the truth were told her. That night, long after Jack was asleep and dreaming of the clown who had so impressed him, Nannie sat by the window in her room, looking over all the letters she had ever received from Margie, and trying from their contents to guess how much she really cared for the people whom she called uncle and aunt and cousins. There were quite a number of them in all, but most of them were rather short, and all were filled with what Margie was herself doing and enjoying, and Nannie, as she read them in the new light of relationship, could not fail to see how little there was in them of real interest in the farm-house, or any thing pertaining to it. To the last three she had signed herself, "Your cousin, *Marguerite*," adding, in a P. S., "Mamma says I am too old to be *Margie* any longer to any one, and that I must be called Marguerite, which is better suited to a tall girl like me than Margie."

Nannie had read this before, of course, but it never struck her just as it did now when the Marguerite seemed to define the position and character of the girl, whose eyes in the photograph looked rather

proudly and coldly into the eyes which were full of tears as Nannie kissed the beautiful face and whispered, "Good-night, sister Margie. I can call you that here in my room, and oh, how I wish you knew how much I love you and how happy it would make me to know that you loved me and would some day come here and call me your sister. Please God," she continued, as she knelt in the moonlight, which fell on her upturned face, "Please God, let Margie know some time that she is ours, and let her come back just once to the old home and not despise it as Jack says she would, and let Jack see the Pyramids, and me, too,—and don't,—don't let the bunch on my shoulder grow, and don't let it be wicked to wear my hair as Jack wants me to, and let me be loved some time as Margie must be loved by all who know her, and——"

Here Nannie's words failed her, and the simple, childlike prayer, which went straighter to the kind Father's ear than many a longer prayer of higher sounding words has done, came to an end. But it was hours before Nannie slept, and when she did it was to dream of Marguerite as Dr. Catheron had seen her at the Marquis' ball, clad in garments of fleecy lace, with hosts of admirers around her.

CHAPTER XI.

A DINNER AT THE FARM-HOUSE.

The next morning about 11 o'clock as Nannie sat on the door-step of the wood-shed shelling peas for dinner, she heard the sound of wheels stopping at the gate, and a moment after a cheery voice startled her by saying, "Oh, here you are, and here I am, come to spend the day, though mamma and Guy and Evans all said you wouldn't want me unannounced, but I knew you wouldn't care, especially as Evans has come with me to help you with the work which Guy says you do all alone, and it is so lonesome at the Pines to-day with Guy gone to Albany. Look, here is Evans with a basket of roses and strawberries, and some jelly for your mother, and a loaf of cake she said I'd better bring. I am so fond of cake, and by and by John will be here with a brick of ice cream. So you see the desert is all arranged and you are not to make company of me, but go right on with the work as if I were not here. I want to see how you do it. I never did any work in my life."

Here the girl stopped to take breath, while Nannie stood staring at her, with her pan of peas in her hand, and Evans put upon the table the roses and berries and jelly and cake, saying in a low, apologetic tone, "I am sorry, but we could not keep her when once her mind was made up, and the doctor was gone. I'll see that she does not

trouble you too much. What can I do to help you most?"

By this time Nannie had recovered herself, and, naturally very hospitable, replied, "You are very kind, and I am pleased to see Miss Grainger, if she will put up with our homely ways. Where is she?" This in some surprise, for Alice had disappeared, but she answered promptly from the next room, the kitchen, "Here I am. I knew Evans would want to apologize a lot, and tell you how determined I was to come, and so I left her to do it and came in here. Good, wasn't I? And this is the dining-room, with a pump in it. Funny!" she continued, her bright eyes wandering rapidly around the apartment, with its uncarpeted floor, its two pumps in the corner, and its old-fashioned table laid for dinner, with the colored cloth and the dishes of stone china.

In much confusion Nannie explained that this was really the kitchen, where in the summer when the stove was moved into the woodshed she spread the meals as it saved her many steps.

"But I will change the table at once into the dining-room," she said, beginning to gather up the plates and forks.

But Alice stopped her.

"No, no," she cried. "I told mamma I would not make a bit of trouble, and I won't. I want to eat in the kitchen, just as you do, and see how it seems. I will not have a change."

"But, Miss Grainger," Nannie began, when Evans interposed and said, "Better let her have her

way without discussion. She will be happier, and is sure to get it in the end."

"That's so," and Alice nodded brightly. "Everybody lets me have my way except Guy, and he is not here. You haven't such a thing as a rose bowl?" she continued, as she began to sort out the lovely roses in the basket.

"A rose bowl?" Nannie repeated, and Alice replied:

"Yes, one of those pretty cut-glass things for roses, with a mirror for a standard. I want something to put these in for the dinner-table. We always have them at home, you know."

Nannie, who had seen so little of the world, did not know that to such families as the one at the Pines, flowers were almost as much a necessity on the table as the dishes themselves, and she had never heard of a rose bowl, but she brought a plain white one with a plate to match from the pantry, and watched Miss Grainger as she deftly arranged the roses in it and then put them in the centre of the table.

"Oh, that is pretty. I wonder I never had flowers before," Nannie said, while Alice, who had always been accustomed to china and cut-glass and silver and the finest of damask, looked at her curiously a moment, and then suggested a button-hole bouquet for each plate.

But to this Evans objected stoutly, and while the altercation went on between the two, Nannie hastened her preparations for dinner, which was later than usual, and for which her father and Jack were waiting out by the well, where they had taken a seat

when they heard of the grand company. Mrs. Rathburn, who had a nervous headache early in the morning, and had been sleeping when the phaeton drew up, was awake now, and in a great flurry with regard to the dinner, lamenting her inability to preside, and giving Nannie many directions as to what she must do and not do.

"And mind you tell your father and Jack to put on their coats. It would be like them to sit down in their shirt sleeves; and they are not to eat with their knives, either," she added, as a last injunction to poor, worried Nannie, who between them all was at her wits' ends, and driven quite out of her head when Alice removed from the table the plate she had put for Evans, and said, "Evans will wait upon us."

"Oh," Nannie answered with a gasp, as she went for her father and Jack, whom she found more tractable than she had feared, for both put on their coats without a demur, although Jack made up a face on the knife question, guessing he should eat as he *darned* pleased and wishing the big-bugs would mind their business and stay where they belonged.

But he ate with his fork mostly, and only used his knife occasionally, when sure that neither Alice nor Nannie were looking at him. It was a plain farmer's dinner, but well cooked, and Alice, who liked nothing better than novelty, enjoyed it greatly, while Nannie did her best to preside as her mother had told her to do, and Evans did her best to wait upon them, with a big dining plate for a tray. Mr. Rathburn remembered having seen something of this kind at his brother's house in Boston, while Nannie, who

had heard of the ceremony, but never seen it, felt sure that, as it was enacted there in the kitchen with the homely surroundings, it was the veriest farce in the world, and her face was very red and her hair very wet with perspiration when the dinner came to an end.

"Leave all the dishes to Evans. That's what she's for," Alice said, as Nannie began to gather up the dishes. "I want you to come with me into the orchard where the grass looks so green."

Nannie yielded the point so far as the dishes were concerned, when Evans, too, seconded her young lady's command, but insisted that Alice should be presented to her mother, who was waiting anxiously to see her. At first Alice refused, saying she did not like a sick room "with its smell of camphor and valerian and beds—"

But Nannie was firm, and the young girl at last yielded, and followed her to the room where Mrs. Rathburn spent so much of her time, and which was always as clean and sweet as Nannie's little hands could make it. Not the faintest odor of camphor or other drug pervaded it anywhere, and Mrs. Rathburn herself made rather a pleasing picture in a white jacket with a knot of blue ribbon at her throat. She had struck her best attitude and pitched her voice on its most ladylike key, and although she was really quivering inwardly with excitement at the great honor she felt was paid her and hers by having Miss Grainger come to them uninvited, there was no trace of it manifest in her manner as she offered her hand to the stranger and bade her sit down beside her.

"Miss Evans will never know where to put the

things if I don't go and tell her, so I will leave you and Miss Grainger alone a little while," Nannie said, and putting back a lock of her mother's hair which had strayed further than usual from her head, she left the room, vaguely hoping her mother would not go off into one of her "high cock-o-lo-rum fits" as Jack called them.

But that was exactly what she did do, and during the twenty minutes of Nannie's absence she managed to let Alice know that she was the poetess whose *nom de plume* was *Senga*,—that only ill health kept her from being a literary star,—that the Rathburns were a very old family, and had in their veins some of the bluest blood in New England, which was better than money, while her family, too, whose ancestors came from France, boasted a title and coat-of-arms in the days of Napoleon I., while as to herself, she was in her youth a beauty and a belle, who, had she chosen to give her hand without her heart, would now have been mistress of one of the most elegant houses in Washington, and the wife of a judge. She did not say all this in so many words, but Alice gathered the meaning she intended to convey, and, shallow as she was in some respects, had formed a pretty accurate estimate of the woman by the time Nannie came to relieve her and take her to the orchard, where she again expressed a desire to go, and where old Brindle lay, taking his after dinner siesta under an apple tree.

"Now tell me all you know of your sister. Guy scolded me well for tattling, but I don't see why you shouldn't know," she said, as they stopped

before the ox, to whom Nannie had brought some cookies, which he ate from her hand.

"I haven't much to tell," Nannie said, "I can only remember her that one day she spent here after she was adopted, and of that I remember scarcely anything except that she rode on old Brindle, while father held her, and that's why he keeps him and pets him so."

As she talked she was petting the beast, while Alice listened eagerly, and then with a bounce seated herself upon Brindle's back, saying, "So Marguerite rode here, did she? I wonder if he will carry me. I should like to try it. Get up, old fellow."

She accented the *get up* with a kick which brought the ox to his feet with an activity not in keeping with his years, while she was left rolling on the grass and laughing merrily.

"Evidently he does not like me as well as he did Marguerite," she said, as she arose and pulled herself together. "Nobody does, not even Guy, or he wouldn't if he were not engaged to me."

Again Nannie was conscious of a feeling of wonder that Dr. Catheron should have chosen this strange girl whom she could not comprehend, and who rattled on, talking sometimes sense, but oftener nonsense, until, noticing the grave expression on her companion's face, she asked suddenly, "What is it, Nannie? Why do you look so solemn, as if you wanted to cry? A penny for your thoughts."

"I was thinking many things," Nannie said, "and among others how happy it would make me to be as beautiful as you and Marguerite are, and to be

loved by some one as Dr. Catheron loves you; not to marry him, you know, for that can never be for me, but to have somebody think more of me than of any one else in the world. Why, I wonder, are the lives of some so full, and why does no crumb ever fall to me?"

In an instant Miss Grainger's mood changed, and passing her arm around Nannie's waist, she said, "You dear little creature, sighing for love and beauty. Don't you know you have the one to a remarkable degree, and will some day have the other?"

Nannie shook her head and Alice continued: "I can tell fortunes when the spell is on me as I feel it now. I have also been reading up palmistry of late. Let me look at your hand."

"What do you see?" Nannie asked, and Alice replied, as she looked into the eyes lifted inquiringly to hers, "I see a hand which has worked and is still working far harder than it ought,—and lovely blue eyes from which looks a soul struggling for something which it has not yet attained, but is sure to get by-and-by. I know all about you; Guy told me, and that's why I came to-day, to bring some change and brightness into your life, but I think I have worried you more than I have done you good. But I don't mean to give it up. I liked you the moment I saw you standing by me under the trees, and when I heard you were Marguerite's sister, I was more interested than before. You ought to know her, Nannie. My spirit of prophecy tells me that some day she will come to you, or you will go to her. There is to be a change in your life. I see

it in the lines of your hand, and through Marguerite happiness will come, and love, such as you hunger for,—more than a crumb, too,—a whole loaf,—that you will be saturated through and through, and I—I shall then be dead—dead! I feel it; I know it. Dead! with so much to live for."

She had dropped Nannie's hand, and the tears were rolling down her face, while Nannie looked wonderingly at her as she kept on for a moment talking to herself in whispers. Then, with a smile which broke over her face as the sunlight breaks through an April shower, she said, "I have been talking a great deal of nonsense, I am afraid, but I couldn't help it, the thoughts crowded into my brain so fast. Don't tell Evans, nor Guy. I am quite myself again, quite."

But she did not seem herself, and was very quiet the rest of the afternoon, and lay upon the lounge in the dining-room, complaining of a headache, until the phaeton, which was to take her home, came to the door.

That night after her work was done, and Nannie sat talking with her mother of the day's events, and descanting upon Miss Grainger's sweetness and beauty, Mr. Rathburn remarked, "Yes, she is very pretty and very sweet, but there's something the matter."

"Something the matter!" Nannie repeated, and her mother replied, "Yes, something the matter *here*," touching her forehead. "She either has been or is still a little crazy."

At that same hour, Alice was talking to her mother of her day at the farm-house, and dwelling

at length upon Mrs. Rathburn, with her poetical flights, her blue blood and titled ancestors, and finishing her description of the invalid with, "Nannie is lovely, and I'm going to cultivate her, but her mother is a crank of the crankiest kind."

CHAPTER XII.

A DINNER AT THE PINES.

A few days after the visit to the farm-house, Alice startled her mother by announcing her intention to have Nannie Rathburn to dinner the following day.

"And, mamma," she said, "please give orders for as elaborate a dinner as you would have if the President's daughter were coming, instead of Nannie, who has seen so little of the world. Why, she did not know what a rose bowl was, and you ought to have heard how pitifully her voice sounded when she wondered why some lives were so full of brightness, while so few crumbs fell to her. But I am going to cultivate her and give her a great many crumbs. If more people, who have so much, would give to those who have so little, both classes would be happier. And now, please, write the invitation at once, and in your best style."

Mrs. Catheron did not care as much about giving crumbs as her daughter, but she liked Nannie, and going to her desk was about to write the note, when Dr. Catheron came in, and hearing from Alice what

was intended, said in some surprise, "You surely will not ask Nannie without her mother!"

"Oh, Guy," Alice exclaimed in a tone of disgust, "I don't want that half crazy crank with all her gush about the poetry of the soul, which no one can control, and besides she can't come, for she told me herself that she was never able to sit up more than half the day, and could not help Nannie in the least, an act which she regretted as only a mother of her sensitive organization could regret, I quote her exact words."

Dr. Catheron smiled at Alice's apt imitation of Mrs. Rathburn's voice and manner, but was firm in saying that she must be invited.

"If she cannot come, inviting her will do no harm, and it will please Nannie," he said, and so Mrs. and Miss Rathburn were both formally invited to dine at the Pines the next day at six o'clock, and a line added to the effect that the carriage would be sent for them at five.

Nannie was in the back kitchen when there came a smart rap at the front door and her mother called from her room, "Take off your calico apron, Nannie. It is some one from the Pines."

It was Michael, the coachman, with the note, which Nannie took to her mother.

"Oh, an invitation to dinner. I'm sure it's a great honor. I wish now I had had my lavender fixed a little, it is so old-fashioned," Mrs. Rathburn said, pleased as a child to be thus noticed by Mrs. Catheron.

"But, mother," Nannie said, doubtfully, "do you think you are able to go? Won't it make you worse?"

259757A

"Oh, no," her mother replied, "and if I knew it would I should feel it my duty to go for your sake, just to let you see how rich people live, and how we might be living if—"

Here she stopped, warned by a look in Nannie's eyes not to indulge in any sentimental regrets for the path she might have taken. Nannie had heard of Tom Carter, now a judge and millionaire in Washington, and had seen him, too, and had declared her father worth a dozen men like him, with his fat neck and bald head and squint eyes,—an opinion in which her mother fully concurred, although it was a kind of inward satisfaction to remember what she had missed, and to speak of it occasionally.

"Going to the Pines may do me a great deal of good. I need a change," she continued after a pause, and so the invitation was accepted for both in a very high sounding note, which Alice read with a wry face, saying to her mother, "*Senga* is coming! I knew she would, and I wish Guy had minded his business!"

That night Nannie lay awake a long time, thinking of the pleasure it would be to see the beautiful things at the Pines, of which she had heard so much. On the occasions when she had been there for books or medicine, she had only been in the office and library, and so knew nothing of the many elegant rooms, with their paintings and statuary and bric-a-brac, which had cost fabulous sums of money.

"I only hope I shan't do anything very awkward," she thought, and with a whispered prayer that she

might get through the dinner respectably, she fell asleep.

The next day was very fine, and by four o'clock Mrs. Rathburn and Nannie were both ready for the visit, Nannie fresh and sweet in her white cambric dress and blue sash, with one or two pond lilies fastened at her belt, and pinned near her throat. These she owed to Jack, who had waded out into the water to get them when he came home to his dinner.

"All the stuck-ups at the Mountain House wear them, and so I s'pose they must be O. K.," he said as he gave them to her, and then boy-like, began to chaff her about feeling big because she was going to dine with the grandees; for his part, he'd rather eat in the barn any day than go through with what he did with that hawk-eyed woman passing him a salt-cellar on a plate!

As for Mrs. Rathburn she was very presentable in her dark lavender silk which Mrs. Amy had sent her some years ago. To be sure it was out of style, but Agnes wore everything with a certain grace peculiar to herself, and with ruffles of real Valenciennes, also the gift of Mrs. Amy, at her throat and wrists, she was a very fair picture of faded gentility when at last, with Nannie, she stepped into the carriage which took them to the Pines. On account of her invalidism Mrs. Rathburn was divested of her wraps in the hall, and ushered at once into the drawing-room, while a maid in cap and streamers took Nannie up to Alice's room, where she stood for a moment bewildered with the beauty which everywhere met her eye The furniture of rosewood

and colored marble, the inlaid floor and costly Persian rugs, the brass bedstead with its hangings of lace, the heavy portieres across the door which led into the dressing-room, itself a gem and work of art, and the long mirrors everywhere, in which Nannie saw herself as she had never seen herself before. A little dowdy body, with shoes too big and dress too stiff and too short, and not at all like the soft, creamy robe which Alice wore. This was what she saw, and a painful thought struck her that she was sadly out of her place, and far better fitted for her own plain home than for this house where the grandeur took her breath away.

Alice seemed greatly excited, but was exceedingly kind and attentive, and after showing her every part of her own room, took her over to the drawing-room where the fine pictures were, and then to the conservatory and green-house, full of palms and ferns and tropical plants, and then to the flower garden in the midst of which a fountain was sending up misty clouds of spray which fell with a pleasant splash into the marble basin where water-lilies were growing. Near this spot the girls sat down upon a willow seat, while Alice asked Nannie how she liked it.

"I think it is lovely," Nannie replied. "I never dreamed of anything so nice. I heard a great deal about the house when Dr. Catheron fitted it up, but the half was never told."

"How would you like to live here?" Alice asked next, and Nannie answered quickly, "I live here! I! It would not suit me at all. I was not meant for a

place like this. It is more like what I imagine Marguerite to be. She would like it, I am sure."

"Marguerite!" Alice exclaimed, in a voice Nannie would never have known as hers, while her eyes glittered with a light which made Nannie draw back from her, "Marguerite! How dare you? What made you speak of her when I am so horribly jealous of her? Don't you know that she has haunted me ever since Guy told me how beautiful she was? I can't help it, for when an idea is once lodged in my brain it stays there, and this torments me so. But it shall not be, and when I am dead—or worse—"

Here a spasm of pain contracted her face and she raised her hand suddenly to her head, then went on rapidly:

"When I am gone past recall out of Guy's life, if, indeed, I was ever in it, I want you to come here, and not Marguerite. I have thought it all over and know somebody will come, and strange as it may seem, I'd rather it should be one not exactly in—in —my sphere, you know, and that's why I had you here to-day. You are lovely and I like you, and you like me, and wouldn't let Guy forget me as the queenly Marguerite would. You will learn, and I am going to teach you all our ways, for something tells me that the time is short—very short."

She was growing more and more excited, and Nannie was staring at her in amazement, and wondering in her simplicity what she could mean, when silently, as if she had been a ghost, Evans appeared from some unseen quarter, and putting her hand very gently but firmly on Alice's arm, said, "It is time to go in. Dinner is nearly ready."

In an instant Alice was herself, and said laughingly, "Evans is my *bete noir* and always round when I want her least, but I have to submit. She will not trouble you, though."

Just then a servant came to announce dinner, and the two girls went into the dining-room, where, in accordance with Alice's wish, the table was laid with as much state as if the President and his wife were guests instead of Mrs. Rathburn and Nannie. There was a bank of flowers in the centre, and flowers at each corner, and cut glass and colored glass, and so many knives and forks and spoons at each place that Nannie felt appalled and wished herself at home taking her simple supper in the kitchen with her father and Jack, and away from the solemn looking colored man who waited upon them, and who, she fancied, watched her so curiously. But Dr. Catheron, by whom she was seated, was very kind and thoughtful, and without seeming to do so helped her over every doubtful place and talked so delightfully that the dinner passed rather pleasantly than otherwise, and at its close she knew many points of table etiquette of which she had never dreamed.

"But I shouldn't like it every day," she thought, "it is such a waste of time, an hour and a half for one dinner, when in hay time we often get through in fifteen minutes."

This was Nannie's mental comment, while in her mother's heart there was a longing for just such grandeur as this, a shrinking from the farm-house, which would seem homelier than ever, and a half regret for the might have been, had she listened to

Tom Carter. Alice was very quiet all through the dinner, and very pale, and after it was over and they had returned to the drawing-room, she seated herself close to the doctor and laid her head upon his arm.

"Are you tired, Allie?" the doctor asked, bending down and stroking her hair.

"A little," was Alice's reply, as she nestled closer to him, while Nannie, who had looked on all the grandeur and elegance around her without a wish that any part of it were hers, was conscious of a thrill of something like pain, or rather longing for what would never come to her. Such things were for girls like Alice or Marguerite, who would have them in full measure, but she never.

There was in Rocky Point a little dwarfish old woman who had never married, and Nannie had often imagined that she should be like Aunt Eunice, if she lived as long.

"But if I am half as good, and people like me as well as they do her, I ought to be happy," was always her consoling thought, and came to her now as she watched Alice and the doctor, and wondered if to Marguerite this kind of love making had yet come.

They were beginning to speak of Marguerite, the doctor asking her mother if she had heard from her recently, and her mother, who did not care to tell how long it was since she had received a letter, answering evasively that she presumed Mrs. James Rathburn was traveling, as she usually was at this season, and so they did not hear as often as they could wish. And then, as she had done every time

she had seen him since the secret was out, she asked if Marguerite were really as beautiful as he had described her to be.

"Yes, more so, if possible. And there is a grace and charm in her smile and manner, which would attract notice even if her face were plain," was the doctor's prompt response.

"Don't, Guy, I can't bear it," Alice moaned, moving away from the arm he had thrown lightly around her.

"Bear what?" the doctor asked in some surprise, and she replied, "My head is aching so hard, and if Mrs. Rathburn and Nannie will excuse me, I will say good-night and go to my room. Please send for Evans. I shall need her."

Mrs. Catheron and the doctor exchanged rapid, and as it seemed to Nannie anxious glances, but did not call Evans. Dr. Catheron himself led Alice from the room, and only returned in time to see Mrs. Rathburn and Nannie to the carriage, which was at the door.

"'Oh the tender grace of a day that is dead,'" Mrs. Rathburn murmured as she sank down among the luxurious cushions, while Nannie, who was not up in Tennyson, looked inquiringly at her. "Such a charming day," she continued, "and such a lovely home, and to think that just such a home might have been mine if I had been as unprincipled as half the women are, and given my hand where my heart could not go; but I don't regret it, I don't regret it, except perhaps for my children."

And in this maudlin way she rambled on about the "might have been" until she reached home, where,

overcome with fatigue and excitement and an overloaded stomach, she collapsed entirely and went to bed, more seriously ill, she declared, than she had ever been in her life. John Rathburn had never heard of Maud Muller. If he had, he, too, might possibly have thought of what might have been during the long night, when with untiring patience he cared for his wife, who, after a violent paroxysm of vomiting, said to him, "Oh, John, it is all my delicate nerves. I can't stand anything."

"Delicate nerves! Humbug!" John repeated, as with one hand he supported her head and with the other held a glass of water to her lips. "It looks more like strawberries and cream than nerves!"

CHAPTER XIII.

NEWS OF MARGUERITE.

The remainder of the summer passed much as other summers had done, with this exception, that Nannie was better and stronger every way. This was owing mostly to the fact that her father had kept his word with regard to sparing her all the hard work possible, and had authorized Dr. Catheron to attend to her whenever he thought she needed medical care. With the easier life the pain in her back, which had troubled her so much at one time, almost entirely ceased, and in her perfect, childlike faith, Nannie charged it all to her constant prayers

that she might not be deformed, and the many times when Jack was not with her to protest, that she twisted her hair into a hard knot so as to show whatever defect there might be in her shoulder, and thus mortify her pride. She was very happy, too, in her friendship with Alice, who sometimes spent whole days at the farm-house and as often as possible had her at the Pines, where Nannie became quite familiar with the habits and customs of the rich, but did not like them.

"I prefer our way to yours, and you can't make a great lady of me if you try," she said to Alice, who was doing her utmost to cultivate her, and was really giving her slices from her loaf instead of crumbs.

Once during the summer there came a letter from Marguerite written at Carlsbad, where they were staying for Mrs. Rathburn's health. It was a very short letter, but the first Nannie had received since she knew Marguerite was her sister, and she lingered long over every word, although rebelling at the "Dear Cousin," with which the letter commenced, and the "Cousin Marguerite," with which it closed. There were allusions in it to uncle and aunt and cousin Jack, and these Nannie punched through with the scissors points.

"It's a lie. We are not her uncles and her cousins and her aunts," she said to her mother, who asked why the letter was mutilated. "Marguerite does not know, of course, but I do. I hate a lie."

It was some weeks before Nannie could bring herself to answer the letter, and when she did, it seemed to her a cold and stiff affair. But could

Marguerite have held the key and read between the lines she would have seen in it a pathetic hungering for love and recognition. After this there was no more news from Marguerite except a postal to say they were in Rome and her mother was better, and so the autumn passed, a cold, rainy autumn, which brought to Mrs. Rathburn an attack of rheumatism and to Alice an increased trouble with her lungs, which kept her in her room until December, when, greatly to her surprise, Nannie heard that she had gone to Philadelphia, and that Mrs. Catheron had gone with her. That virtually closed the house at the Pines until April, when one morning Evans suddenly appeared at the farm-house, saying they had returned the evening previous and that Miss Alice was anxious to see Nannie.

"Come as soon as you can after your early dinner," she said, "and be careful not to excite her. She is very weak."

Nannie found her in her room lying upon a lounge and habited in a tea gown of old rose satin, with jabots of creamy lace down the front, a round red spot on either cheek and a brightness in her eyes which she had never seen before. But that which changed her most was the loss of her hair, which when she went away was rather long, but it had been cut again and was just beginning to grow in waves all over her head, giving her more the look of a child than ever.

"Oh, Alice," Nannie cried, kneeling down beside her and kissing her thin face. "I am so glad to see you once more. I didn't know you had been so ill. Why didn't you write? I should have written you,

but didn't know where to direct. I asked the doctor once, and he either did not hear me, or did not want to tell, and it is all so strange. What is it, Alice? What has been the matter? and why was your hair cut off again when you wanted it to get long?"

She was stroking the shorn head as she talked, while Alice gasped for breath, and answered faintly, "Not so fast, Nannie. One question at a time, for you see I am very weak. I didn't write to anybody, my head ached so I couldn't think, and they cut off my hair just as they did before, because——," she hesitated a moment, while the round red spot on her cheek grew redder,—"because it troubled me. But it's growing again, and Guy says it makes me look like a little girl. Guy is so good and has been so kind through it all. But it will not be very long now. Have you heard from Marguerite since she reached New York, and is she coming to see you soon? I should like to see her once, although I shall not tell her who she is—I know better than to do that."

"Marguerite in New York! What do you mean?" Nannie asked, springing to her feet.

"Don't you know that Mrs. Rathburn came home in March, and is very ill at the Windsor?" Alice replied, and Nannie answered her, "We have heard nothing for months. Tell me all you know."

"It can surely be no secret," Alice said. "You know Guy came to Philadelphia for us, and on our way home we stopped in New York at the Windsor, and when Mrs. Rathburn heard Guy was there she sent for him to her room. He thinks her fatally ill, and that she cannot live long."

"Yes," Nannie said, with a choking sensation in her throat. "And did he see Marguerite?"

"He saw her,—just for a few moments, and thought her lovelier even than at the ball in Paris. He has no idea how it tortures me when he talks of her beauty."

Nannie scarcely noticed this, so absorbed was she in the thought that Marguerite was in New York, so near and yet, in one sense, so far.

"Oh, if I could only go to her, and see her once, face to face, and tell her I am her sister, and hear her call me that, and know that she liked me," she said, dropping again by the side of Alice's couch and covering her face with her hands, "Please God," she continued, "grant she may know I am her sister, and love me a little."

"Why, Nannie, you are praying," Alice said, looking curiously at the kneeling girl. "And such a funny prayer, too. As if God cared whether you see Marguerite soon or not, or she knows you are her sister."

"But he does care," Nannie answered stoutly, ready to defend her faith. "Doesn't your mother care for what troubles you, no matter how trivial it may seem to her, and is she better than God?"

This was a point on which Alice did not feel equal to argue, and so made no reply.

"I must go now," Nannie said after a moment, "and tell mother what I have heard," and bidding Alice good-bye she left the house and went rapidly down the avenue into the road, where she began to run, and soon stood in her mother's room. "Oh, mother," she cried, "Marguerite is in New York.

Dr. Catheron saw her there. Aunt Amy is very ill."

"Yes, I know it," Mrs. Rathburn replied, taking a letter from under her pillow and handing it to Nannie. "This came just after you went out and has quite upset me. I don't know what we are to do. Think of your Aunt Amy being a beggar and sending Marguerite back to us penniless with all her expensive tastes."

Nannie was not listening to her mother, but was eagerly devouring the letter, which was as follows:

"Windsor Hotel, April 15, 18—.

"DEAR BROTHER AND SISTER:

"I have put off writing to you as long as possible, hoping against hope that I might not have to do it, but can wait no longer, for my days are numbered and I am surely dying with an incurable disease, which will soon reach the crisis. Of course it is for Marguerite that I am most concerned, the dear child who has been a comfort to me from the day I took her for my own. Looking back from my dying bed I can see that in my selfishness, or pride, or both, I did wrong to keep her real parentage from her. It would have been better had she known always whose child she was, and I should now be spared the pain of telling her, as I must. There is no alternative, nor has she, as I can see, any door open to her at present but yours.

"But to come to the point. I am literally penniless. I was never worth as much as people thought me to be. My habits have been most expensive, my investments unfortunate; some who had charge of my business proved false to their trust, and when a few months ago the great firm of ——— went down, it ruined me, for all I had left was there. The old home in Nashville is mortgaged for more than it is

worth, and I have barely enough to keep me until I die, and pay necessary expenses after.

"There you have the bare facts, which as yet are not known to Marguerite. She is a girl of strong individuality and excellent principles, and I think the deception so long practiced towards her will hurt her the worst, for she hates anything of that kind and will call it living a lie, and so, perhaps, it was, although I thought it for the best. She is very beautiful, with a sweetness in her voice and a graciousness in her manner which is better than beauty, and wins all hearts to her. She has had every possible advantage in the way of education and travel and society, and many offers of marriage. Had she chosen she might have been a German Baroness, a French Countess, or an English lady, but she is thoroughly American, and her choice has fallen upon one of her own countrymen, Harry Bellamy, who comes of a very old and aristocratic New York family. He is a young man of unexceptional habits, and I have nothing against him except that he has been brought up to do nothing but enjoy himself, even though he is not very wealthy. I think his nature weaker than Marguerite's, while I hold that the man's should be the stronger of the two. But if she is satisfied, I am, for she will have a great influence over him. Their engagement has not yet been publicly announced, but is understood by his mother, who seems very fond of her——"

"Oh—h!" and Nannie drew a long breath, now intensely interested, as she always was in such affairs. "If Marguerite were engaged to one of the first young men in New York and loved him, she could not be very unhappy, no matter what befell her." Then she read on:

"Mrs. Bellamy and her son and a young lady,

Miss Lucy Grady, who was Mr. Bellamy's ward, traveled with us in Europe for some time, and are still there, but are expected home in a week or two. As soon as they come I shall tell them everything, and I think Harry's love for Marguerite is strong enough to overcome any obstacles his mother may raise to the marriage on account of the changed circumstances both in family and money matters. She is very proud, and thinks a great deal of money and position, and has unbounded influence with her son. But I have faith in Harry, and hope he will insist upon being married at once, in which case Marguerite may not have to come to you for any length of time. But I must be prepared for any emergency, and I wish you both to write to Marguerite, welcoming her back as your daughter, and saying whatever you can to make it easy for her. These letters I will give her when I tell her the truth, and may God help her to bear it. Write at once, for the time is short, and I only hope to live until I hear from you, and Mrs. Bellamy arrives.

"You have a physician in your town, a very superior man, Dr. Catheron, whom I first met in Paris, and when a few days since I heard he was in the hotel I called him in professionally. But like all the others he gave me no encouragement. I am getting very tired and must stop, not knowing whether I have made my wishes clear to you or not. So I add that if Marguerite does not marry Mr. Bellamy your house is her only refuge, as she will have nothing to live upon, and could not live alone in New York if she had.

"Anxiously awaiting your answer, I am,

"Yours very truly,

"AMY RATHBURN."

This was the letter which had nearly thrown Agnes into convulsions, and sent her husband off

into the woods where, on a fallen log, he sat down and with his face buried in his hands, tried to realize just what had come upon him, and to bring to life in its full intensity the love he had felt eighteen years ago for the little girl whose white sunbonnet he had watched till he could see it no longer, and when it disappeared from view felt that his heart was breaking. She was a young woman now of twenty-two, with expensive tastes and habits, and no sentiment whatever in common between herself and her family. But she was his daughter; nothing could undo that, and a feeling of pride stirred his heart as he said aloud:

"It isn't in me to gush like Aggie, and I don't know whether I'm glad or not to have her back this way; but she's my oldest girl, and is welcome to such a home as I have to give her, and I am willing to work harder than I ever have worked to get things for her, but it will be mighty tough on her after the life she's led, and the Lord only knows what we'll do with a fine lady in our house. But I shan't worry. Nan will manage it somehow, and will be pleased to have her sister with her, while Marguerite is sure to like Nan."

John Rathburn's faith in Nannie was somewnat stronger than his faith in the Lord, and comforted with the assurance that she would straighten all difficulties, he became quite composed in his mind and went about his work as usual, and when later on Jack joined him in the field, he said to him quite indifferently, "I' spose you've heard the news, and know that Margie is coming home?"

"Yes, darn it all, and I don't like it, either. What

are we to do with a stuck-up watching how we eat and how we talk and how we sneeze," Jack said, giving a hitch to his suspenders and kicking at a dry mullein stalk. "But Nan is glad, you bet! Why, she's carryin' on like a mad critter, laughing and crying and hiccoughing all at once, and has begun to train me already, telling me I must say Marguerite instead of Margie, and must write to-night and say I am glad she's coming and all that. Nan's awful gushy when she gets on a tear."

"And shan't you write?" Mr. Rathburn asked, eyeing his son curiously.

"No, *sir!*" Jack answered him, with another hitch at his suspenders. "Why should I, when I ain't glad? I never saw her in my life, and 'tain't likely she cares shucks for me. I am willing she should come home, and willing to work like a dog to help support her, and I shall treat her civil, if she don't try to boss me too much. But I shall eat in my shirt sleeves when it's hot, and with my knife, too! Both mother and Nan have got after me about that so soon. I wonder what makes women so queer?"

"I don't know; but if I'se you I guess I'd call her *Margret* if Nan wants you to. Her head is mostly level," Mr. Rathburn replied, and there the conversation relative to Marguerite ended, nor was it ever resumed between them in just the same way.

As Jack had told his father, Mrs. Amy's letter had produced a wonderful effect upon Nannie, who really did cry and laugh and hiccough all in the same breath. Of course she was very sorry that Marguerite should lose her adopted mother and her money. "But, then," she thought, "she has so much left

which nothing can take from her. Her beauty, her education, her travel, her lover, and her real father and mother and brother and sister, who will make her so welcome."

The hint which Mrs. Amy had given of a possible speedy marriage, Nannie did not for a moment consider.

"Marguerite will not marry just before, or just after the death of the only mother she has ever known, and we shall have her all to ourselves for a long, long time. Oh, I am so glad, and I hope she will be happy here. If love can make her so she shall be," she said to her mother, who was really too much overcome with the shock to talk, and could only smile sadly at Nannie's enthusiasm, and hope she might not be disappointed.

For herself she was really more sorry than glad. Not that she did not wish to see her daughter, for she did, and the mother's heart went out towards her with a deep feeling of affection and pride. But to have her back in the way she was coming, could not be pleasant for Marguerite, who naturally would be very homesick and unhappy and possibly despise her humble surroundings.

"And I cannot blame her, if she does," she thought, as she looked around the room, which, although the best furnished in the house, was probably inferior to anything Marguerite had ever known.

Like Nannie she had no faith in the immediate marriage of her daughter with Harry Bellamy, and remembering what Amy had said of Mrs. Bellamy, she felt some apprehension lest it should not take place at all. But all suspicions of this kind must be

concealed, and Marguerite must never know that her mother was not perfectly happy to have her child home again.

"In my letter I must make her understand that I, at least, am capable of sympathizing with her in her tastes, and not altogether a heathen," she thought, and as soon as she felt herself equal to it, she began the letter which was to impress Marguerite with a sense of her own merits as a cultivated and appreciative woman.

It took her a long time to compose it, for much of it was written and re-written, and after it was done and copied, she went off into so violent a fit of hysterics that Jack was sent in hot haste for Dr. Catheron, who found her in a more nervous state than he had ever seen her before.

"Has she had any sudden shock?" he asked, as he saw how she trembled, and how limp and weak she seemed.

"Yes, oh, yes," Mrs. Rathburn answered for herself. "Marguerite is coming home as soon as her aunt is dead, and coming penniless, too, for Amy has lost all her money. You saw her in New York,—Marguerite, I mean. Amy wrote us that she called you to her sick room. You know what she is better than we do. How do you think she will bear it—to come from her proud position as an heiress and daughter of Mrs. James Rathburn, down to poverty and *us?*"

She laid great stress on the *us*, and Nannie, who was listening to her with a troubled face, said pleadingly: "Please, mother, don't talk like that. Marguerite is *ours*, and we shall try to make her happy."

"And I am sure you will succeed," the doctor

rejoined, feeling an emotion of pity for this little girl, so frail and yet so brave through everything. "I only saw Miss Rathburn a few moments," he continued, "but she impressed me as one who would make the best of circumstances. She could hardly be your sister, and not do that."

He was very kind and comforting, and Nannie's heart was lighter and happier because of it, and the letter she wrote to Marguerite that night was full of her hopefulness and happiness, and would carry some grains of comfort to the girl who, a few weeks later, was to read it with tear-dimmed eyes and a breaking heart. Jack absolutely refused to write, when urged to do so by Nannie.

"I've never seen her. I don't know what to say. I can't compose," he said, and the most Nannie could extort from him was permission to send his *respects*. "You needn't put it *love*, for I don't love her, and it isn't likely I ever shall, as I do you. Why should I?" he said, and with his respects Nannie had to be content.

Over his letter Mr. Rathburn wasted but few words. It was very short, and to the point. But he meant all he said, and he wrote a second one to Amy, signifying his willingness to take Marguerite back, and then the four letters were put in one envelope and addressed to Mrs. James Rathburn, Windsor Hotel, New York.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARGUERITE.

Mrs. James Rathburn had come back from Europe with a mortal disease, and all her fortune gone. As she had said, it had never been as large as it was reported to be, but it pleased her vanity to be thought a millionaire, and as the deception harmed no one and gave her more prestige than she might otherwise have had in society she allowed it to pass, although in her palmiest days she had not been worth half the amount credited to her. But she lived up to her reputation and spent her money with a free hand. She travelled a great deal, stopping always at the best hotels and occupying the most expensive suite of apartments, in which her meals were usually served, as she was much too great a lady to mingle with the common herd. She kept a courier and a maid, and frequently a governess for Marguerite, who was reared with more care, if possible, and guarded more sedulously from contact with anything commonplace or vulgar than princesses of the royal household. At the old home in Nashville, when a child, she was cared for by the blacks, who adored her, and when she went abroad, she was waited upon by French maids who flattered and adored her, too, while the world in which she lived paid homage to her as to a queen. Under similar circumstances an ordinary girl would have been spoiled. But Marguerite was not an ordinary

girl, and in her veins there was too much Rathburn blood to allow her head to be entirely turned because she was a beauty and a belle and an heiress.

It is true she liked being an heiress and a belle and a beauty, but as she had never known any other condition, she was wholly free from the pride and hauteur which comes from sudden elevation, and if she sometimes seemed cold and proud and haughty, it was her training which made her so, and not anything in her disposition. She could not help her high-bred, aristocratic air, which many people called pride, any more than she could help the color of her eyes or hair. "A man's a man for a' that" was a sentiment in which she said she fully believed, and knowing that people thought her proud, she strove hard to be as gracious to the servant who brought her a bouquet as to the admirer who sent it. When the German Baron asked her to be his wife, she knew that he meant what he said, was sorry for him, and refused him so kindly that she made a friend for life. When the French Count who was old enough to be her father, offered her his title, she laughed in his face, and when the English lord sought her for her money, she turned from him in scorn, telling him that she preferred an American to all the titles in Europe, and at last the American came in the person of young Harry Bellamy, who, as Mrs. Amy Rathburn had written, belonged to one of the oldest and best families in New York. If he had not, Marguerite would not have cared. She had family enough for both of them, she thought, for she was proud of her blood, especially on the southern side, as she supposed her

mother to be. She would like to have had Harry older than he was, for he was only a year her senior, and with his fair hair and light blue eyes, might easily be mistaken for her junior. She wished, too, that he had more mind of his own, and were not so easily influenced by a stronger will, and that he had been trained to some kind of business, for in her estimation a man should have something to do, no matter how rich he might be, and she supposed Harry to be nearly, if not quite, as rich as herself.

Rumor, however, which is often ill-natured and misinformed, hinted that the Bellamys did not count their money by hundreds of thousands, and that Mrs. Bellamy, who constantly threw the young people together, was actuated quite as much by what she believed her prospective daughter-in-law would bring to the Bellamy coffers, as by admiration for the girl herself. But Harry was madly in love, and was so ardent, and persistent, and earnest in his wooing, that Marguerite accepted him, but told him frankly what she had against him, while Harry laughingly promised to reform. He was half a head taller than she was, he said, which should count for something, and in time he should look older, when he had raised a beard as he was trying to do. As to business, when they were married, he would, if she liked, emigrate to Tacoma or Spokane Falls, and take possession of the stump or pile of stones which his mother had been inveigled into buying for him by an agent who had Tacoma and Spokane on the brain, and as Marguerite, too, owned a gate or bit of rail fence in that vicinity, they

might set up as great land owners, and perhaps open a hotel or run a ranch. As to her third objection, he did not think she ought to consider it a minute, inasmuch as hers was the stronger will and she could mould him as she liked.

And so they were engaged with the understanding that the engagement should not be openly announced to their friends until they were both in America, as they hoped to be soon.

"And mind, Harry," Marguerite said, "you are not to keep dangling after me all the time, or look at me as I have seen you do, for I am going to have a good time flirting with these foreign dudes before I go home, and then I shall settle down into the most exemplary wife imaginable."

And Harry promised not to dangle or look, but looked and dangled just the same, and when in March Marguerite sailed for New York he went with her to Havre, and at parting kissed her three or four times before the ship's crew, bidding her write to him every day and saying he would do the same.

"Harry is a goose in some respects, but very nice after all," Marguerite said to herself as she arranged her state-room and then went to the dining salon, where she found six baskets of exquisite flowers, on only one of which was Harry's name.

But Marguerite knew that he sent them all, not wishing her to be outdone by others in the matter of flowers, or to have it appear that she had only one friend to remember her, and with the Rathburn dislike to deception, as strong in her as in Nannie, she

placed a card on each of the five baskets with Harry's name upon it, and satisfied her conscience. The voyage was a stormy one, and when they reached New York, Mrs. Rathburn went at once to her bed and never again left her room until she was carried out to Greenwood. As Marguerite knew no one in the hotel and could not go out without her mother she was very lonely, and found herself constantly longing for Harry, who was always in good spirits and the best of company. It was all sunshine with him, and Marguerite missed the sunshine of his presence, his boyish laugh, his merry jokes, and the constant and tender caresses, which she had thought a little too effusive in Paris.

"I don't believe I half appreciated him," she said to herself one morning, when the day was gloomier than usual, and the April rain was beating against the windows of her room. "He is really very nice—the only man in fact I ever saw that I could for a moment consider."

And then—how or why she did not know, her thoughts went back to the Marquis of ——'s ball given more than two years ago, and at which a stranger had been presented to her whose face had haunted her for months, it was so strong and manly and full of force, while the dark gray eyes, which had rested upon her with more than mere admiration in them, were very kind and gentle in their expression, and held her own a moment as with a spell, making her feel as if their owner had some message for her—something he would tell her if he could. Then Harry claimed her for a waltz, and the eyes which had looked so searchingly into

hers were lost in the crowd, and she had never seen them since, nor could she remember the stranger's name; possibly she had not understood it, although it seemed to her that it was a Dr. Somebody.

"A married man, probably, with children. He looked much older than Harry," she was thinking, just as the nurse entered from her mother's room, and said that Dr. Catheron, an eminent physician, was with her patient, who had sent for him when she heard he was in the hotel.

"Dr. Catheron," Marguerite repeated, "where have I heard that name before? Is he with mamma? I am going to see him;" and, driven by something she could not resist, she went to meet the man who was to enter so largely into her future life.

Turning towards the door as she came in, Dr. Catheron saw before him a tall, graceful, proud-looking girl, with splendid physique, a brilliant complexion, large, brown eyes, and masses of dark chestnut hair, which, in the sunlight, would show glints of a golden hue, features not altogether faultless, but with an expression so sweet, and dimples which played hide-and-seek so fast whenever she smiled that no one would for an instant call her anything but beautiful in its highest sense. This was the picture presented to him, while Marguerite saw with surprise and bewilderment a broad shouldered, handsome man, with brown hair and beard, and the same large, gray eyes which had once before looked at her amid the din and heat and glamor of a Parisian ball-room, just as they looked

at her now, with a more than common interest in their gaze.

"Marguerite, this is Dr. Catheron," Mrs. Rathburn said, and, won by the magnetism of the man, which always impressed itself upon those with whom he came in contact, if he so willed it, Marguerite, contrary to her custom with strangers, laid her hand in his as she said, "I am glad to see you, Dr. Catheron. You do not remember me, of course, but I once saw you in Paris. I hope you can help mamma."

Men like Harry Bellamy would have said that, once seen, Marguerite Rathburn could not be forgotten, but the doctor merely replied, "I do remember you perfectly, Miss Rathburn," and then went on to speak of her mother, whom he would gladly help if he could, and as he talked he kept her hand in his a little longer than was necessary, while it seemed again to Marguerite that there was a message for her in the eyes looking so steadily into hers, but it was not given, and after a few commonplace remarks he left the room.

"Mamma," Marguerite said, the moment he was gone, "who is he? I remember him at the Marquis's ball, but where did you know him?"

"I saw him first in Paris," Mrs. Rathburn replied, "but had heard of him before as a young physician of great promise. He studied his profession abroad, and has, I believe, a large fortune left him by his father. It is a little strange that he should prefer the country to the city, as he does, and he has a lovely home, I am told, at Rocky Point, where he is idolized by the people."

"Rocky Point," Marguerite repeated. "Why, that's where my uncle lives. Strange a man like him should settle there!"

To her who knew so little of the country, Rocky Point was almost like heathendom, even though her uncle lived there. Of such people as her father and mother, and Nannie, and Jack, she knew comparatively nothing, for she had never come in contact with that class. That they might be very good and very respectable she knew, but they were not at all like her world, and she wondered how a man like Dr. Catheron could bury himself in an obscure country town, when he was so well fitted for the city. Mrs. Rathburn had conscientiously tried to keep the inmates of the farm-house in Marguerite's mind, insisting many times that she should answer Nannie's letters when Marguerite was inclined to put it off.

"They are your own flesh and blood," she would say, "and all the relatives you have on your father's side, and they are very nice people."

And Marguerite accepted them as nice, and was sorry that they were so poor, and felt a good deal drawn towards Nannie, whose quaint letters interested and amused her when they were not too long and too full of minor details of her homely life. A few years before, Nannie had sent her photograph, taken by a country artist, and as Nannie thought, a masterpiece of art. But Marguerite had only smiled at the prim little figure, sitting up so straight and stiff in the scant, white dress, with the hands so placed as to show to the worst possible advantage. The face nothing could spoil, and something in the

great blue eyes appealed to Marguerite and stirred within her a feeling she could not define.

"I am sure Nannie is very sweet," she always said to herself when thinking of her, and there her interest ended, but the time was close at hand when Nannie would be presented to her in a new light, and she be called upon to test the genuineness of her oft repeated assertion that "a man's a man for a' that."

CHAPTER XV.

SHE HEARS THE TRUTH.

Mrs. Rathburn had received the letters from Rocky Point and put them away until such time as they would be needed. And this time had come at last. She was failing rapidly, and might drop away any day, the doctor told her, adding that whatever she had to do in the way of business should be done at once. But she had no business except telling Marguerite, and one morning when she felt a little stronger than usual she bade her nurse send her daughter to her; "and, Marie," she added, "you can stay away for half an hour or more. I shall not want you."

Marguerite was in her room reading a letter from Harry, or rather letters, for he had kept his promise to write every day, and as a consequence she sometimes had three or four in one mail, all full of the same things, love and loneliness and desire to

see her again, and this he hoped to do soon, as they were to sail in a week or two.

"Why, he must be on the ocean now. He will be here in a few days," she was saying to herself when the nurse entered with her mother's message.

Crushing the letters into her pocket, she went to the sick room, where she found her mother propped up on pillows and cushions, a position in which she breathed more easily.

"Oh, mamma," she said, smoothing the soft gray hair. "How bright you look. You are surely better. Dr. Catheron has helped you."

"No, darling," Mrs. Rathburn replied. "Nothing can ever really help me, and in a few days at the most I shall be dead. That is why I have sent for you now; there is something I must tell you, something which will require all your fortitude to bear."

Marguerite had been told that her mother must die, but, with the hopefulness of youth, she still clung to the belief that everybody was wrong and that her mother would live.

"Surely, mamma," she said, "you cannot tell me anything worse than you did when you said you must die, and that I cannot believe. What is it, dearest?"

She was kissing the wan face, which quivered with pain as Mrs. Rathburn replied, "There are things worse than death, though this is hardly one of them. But sit there in the chair where I can see you as I tell you, and know if all your love for me is fading from your face."

Marguerite was as pale now as her mother, as she seated herself in the large easy chair, while Mrs.

Rathburn was wondering which she should tell her first, of her birth, or her loss of money.

"She is very proud of her position, and will bear the loss of her money the better of the two," she finally decided, and then began, "I am leaving you penniless, my child,—with nothing but your jewels, and that land near Spokane Falls, which is valueless now, and may always be."

There was a sudden start and a tight locking together of Marguerite's hands, but she did not speak, and her mother went on: "I was never worth as much as people thought, and we have lived extravagantly, spending hundreds where tens would have done as well, but my tastes are luxurious and I have brought you up in the same way. My investments have turned out badly; people who owed me have failed, agents, whom I have trusted, have cheated and robbed me, until there is nothing left; even the old home in Nashville is mortgaged for all it is worth, and we are now living on the proceeds of the last loan."

"Oh, mamma," Marguerite said, "why did you not tell me this long ago, so we could have economized? I would gladly have worked to take care of you. Surely my education should count for something. Oh, don't look at me in that terrified way as if afraid of what I may say. Poverty will not be so bad if shared with you. We can do something. I can. I am strong and willing. Only live, that's all I ask for, and I will take care of you. Life will be so dreary with no father, or mother, or brother, or sister."

Here was Mrs. Rathburn's chance, and she took

it, and said rapidly: "That is what I must tell you also. You have a father, and mother, and brother, and sister, waiting to receive you when I am gone."

"Wha—at—do—you—mean? I don't understand," Marguerite asked, leaning forward in her chair, with a look of wonder, while her mother replied:

"I mean that you are not my child, except by adoption."

"Not your child!" and the eyes, usually so soft in their expression, seemed to glow and give out little gleams of fire as they were wont to do when Marguerite was greatly excited. "Whose child am I, and where are my father, and mother, and brother, and sister, and why has this been kept from me so long?" she asked.

For a moment there was perfect silence in the room, the sick woman nerving herself to speak, and the girl bracing herself to hear. Then Mrs. Rathburn said: "Your father is Mr. John Rathburn, of Rocky Point: his wife is your mother, Jack is your brother, and Nannie is your sister. You love Nannie, Marguerite?"

She grasped at this as a grain of comfort, as a drowning man at a straw, for something in Marguerite's face frightened her, it was so white, and cold, and hard, as she rose to her feet, and standing up tall, and straight, and stern, said in a choking voice, "Don't speak of Nannie now, but tell me *why* it happened, and when, and how. Tell me everything."

And Mrs. Rathburn told her everything; of her husband's death in Italy, followed so soon by the sad

death of her little girl, of her utter loneliness and intense longing for a child to beguile her wretchedness by taking her mind from herself, of her visit to the farm-house, where she found three little children, a sickly mother and an overworked, discouraged man, with a heavy mortgage on his farm, and his inability to meet it, of the little girl who came so readily to her with a look in her face like the child which had died on the ocean and been buried at sea, of the great desire to have this little girl for her own, of her proposition to adopt her, and the offer of money she had made, which was at first rejected, and then, as she urged the matter more and more, finally accepted, and the condition imposed that no sign of the girl's real parentage should ever be given to her. Nothing was kept back, and Marguerite knew the whole at last, and for a moment, which seemed to her mother an age, she stood as if frozen into stone. Then she said very slowly, as if some cruel hand were clutching her throat and choking her speech:

"And so my father and mother sold me? May I ask what price you paid?"

Nannie had asked a similar question on a similar occasion, but Nannie's voice, though full of pain and reproach, was not like Marguerite's, nor was her face like the one confronting the trembling woman, who could only whisper the words, "Five thousand dollars, and your father has been comfortable ever since."

"Five thousand dollars," Marguerite repeated, with bitter scorn. "Not so bad a sum for a man to ask and a woman to pay for a girl like me!"

"Oh, Marguerite, Marguerite," Mrs. Rathburn

cried. "Why do you torture me so! Don't you see you are killing me, and can't you understand how I wanted you for my very own, and how I persuaded them? and don't you know how dear you are to me, and how I have loved you, my darling, my pet, and that in many respects it was better for you to be brought up as I have brought you up? Is there nothing in all this to make amends for what you call a sale of yourself?"

The voice was very piteous in its tones, and the white hands beat the air in a helpless kind of way, which touched Marguerite a little, and sinking into a chair, for she could no longer stand, she answered in a softer tone: "Yes, I know; but don't you, too, understand how terrible it is for me to find suddenly that I am some one else, besides the shame of having lived a lie all these years, passing for what I am not."

"The lie has not been yours, but mine. You didn't know, and cannot be blamed," Mrs. Rathburn replied, while Marguerite asked, "Which was the more willing to part with me, my father or my mother?"

Mrs. Rathburn did not wish to prejudice her against either parent, but something in Marguerite's eyes wrung the truth from her, and she replied: "Your father held out longest. I think you were his favorite, but both relented, and early the next morning your father rode over to the Mountain House to say they could not give you up, they would rather lose the farm."

"Yes," Marguerite said eagerly, with a feeling

that the hand on her throat was not holding it quite so tightly, "yes, and why didn't he take me back?"

"Because you were not there. I had left for New York in the night train, and as the days went by they became accustomed to live without you, hoping, I dare say, that in some way you would come back to them. I think it has aged your father, and perhaps been in a way the cause of your mother's ill-health."

"Yes," Marguerite said again, conscious of some slight comfort in knowing that the father and mother who could sell her had not only suffered for it, but still retained some affection for her, although she could feel none in particular for them.

To her they were only her uncle and aunt,—good, respectable country people, to whom it had been her duty to be kind, because accident had made them her kin. She could not at once think of them as her father and mother; her whole nature, or rather her training, was in hot rebellion against it, as she leaned back in her chair like a crushed and hunted creature, with a wish that this might prove some horrible night-mare from which she should awaken suddenly. She thought of Nannie, and the sweet little face which had looked at her only the day before when she accidentally stumbled upon the old-fashioned photograph, and she was instantly conscious of some subtle sensation, which was neither aversion nor pain, but very soothing, like a cool hand on a burning brow.

"Nannie is my sister," she whispered; then said aloud, "Does Nannie know who I am, and has she been a party to the deception?"

"She has not known until recently, but she does now, of course, and she has sent you a letter with the others," Mrs. Rathburn replied, explaining that she had some time before written to her brother-in-law and his wife, and that arrangements had been made for Marguerite's returning to them in case it was necessary.

"And what is to prevent its being necessary?" Marguerite asked, and after a little hesitancy Mrs. Rathburn replied, "I have hoped that possibly Harry, when he knows, will insist upon a speedy marriage, in which case you may not be obliged to go to Rocky Point at all, or at most for a very short time."

Until that moment Harry Bellamy had not entered Marguerite's mind, and the thought of him now brought no abatement to the bitter ache in her heart, which seemed still throbbing in her throat, and keeping down the tears it would be a luxury to shed.

"I shall release Harry from his engagement the moment I see him," she said. "And he will accept it, too, for do you think a son of Mrs. Bellamy would marry a nobody like me? Give me the letters, please, and let me begin to make the acquaintance of my family."

She spoke proudly, and there were bright spots on her cheeks and a glitter in her eyes as she rose to her feet with the languid movement of a person who has been stricken with a long illness.

"Kiss me first, my child, in token that you are at peace with me," Mrs. Rathburn said, and Marguerite kissed the white lips, and wiped the great

sweat drops from the pallid face, and then going t the escritoire, as she was bidden, found the three le ters, her father's, her mother's, and Nannie's, and too them to her room.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LETTERS.

As Marguerite entered her room, she was co scious of a strange sensation of carrying two head each of which belonged to a different individua one the Marguerite Rathburn she had thought he self to be an hour ago, the other the Margueri Rathburn she now knew herself to be, the Ma guerite who had no business in that luxuriousl furnished chamber, with all the appliances of wealt around her, and on her person the handsome te gown of crimson satin, the bracelets on her wrist the diamonds on her fingers, and more than a Harry Bellamy's laughing blue eyes, which looke at her from the costly antique photograph frame c her dressing-table. Her place was not here in Ne York City, but among the New England hills, in th plain, old-fashioned farm-house where she was bor but of which she could only recall a few inciden of the one day spent there fifteen years before, whe she was seven years old. Sitting down by the tabl and covering her face with her hands, she went ov with each incident again, trying to remember ju

how it looked; the house was red, she knew, and there were peonies in the yard, for somebody had given her one,—a man, she believed, and a rough looking man, too,—in his shirt sleeves, like the peasants she had seen working in the fields in Europe. But he had been very kind to her, and taken her where there was a great deal of green grass, with some oxen feeding on it, and he had put her upon the back of one of them, and held her there, while she rode slowly around under the apple trees, which were in full bloom. And he had kissed her when he put her up and when he took her down.

"That was my father who kissed his own daughter and I did not know him," she whispered, with a pity in her heart for the man who dared not call her daughter, because of the promise given.

Then she thought again of the house, whose rooms were large, she was sure, and not at all like the rooms to which she had been accustomed, but homely and plain, with a horrible sounding piano, on which she had been asked to play her finger exercises by a woman with a washed-out look, and her hair curling in her neck like a girl's.

"That was my mother," she said, and the hand upon her throat tightened its grip, so that she gasped for breath, and wished that she could cry and ease the pressure on her brain.

Then she thought again, and what she saw in that far past was a little girl, with blue eyes and golden hair, whom she had led by the hand when she went out to the orchard, and she felt again the touch of the soft fingers which had held hers so fast

for a while, and then, while she rode on the ox, had filled the little check apron with the drifting apple blossoms.

"That was Nannie," she said aloud, feeling that the tears were almost ready to flow.

But something beat them back, and with a dry, painful sob she lifted up her head and said, "That is all I can remember,—father, mother, and Nannie; Jack could not have been born, although it seems to me there was a baby somewhere, but I don't know, it is all so confused and strange, and my head is confused, too. I wonder if I am losing my mind."

The slipping from her lap to the floor of the letters recalled her to herself, and picking them up she began to examine them one by one, and first her father's, whose handwriting she never remembered to have seen, and at which she looked critically as something for which she was in part responsible. It was neither business-like nor scholarly, nor yet was it a hand of which to be ashamed, and Marguerite was glad of that, and wondered why so little a thing should comfort her, or why she had half expected to find it wholly uneducated and rude.

"Miss Marguerite Rathburn, New York," was all the superscription, and the girl lingered over it a moment as if fascinated by it, and then took up her mother's which was directed, "Miss Marguerite Rathburn, Windsor Hotel, New York City," while in the lower left hand corner were the words, "From your mother," which did not move Marguerite half so much as the simple, "For Marguerite," on the back of Nannie's letter.

Both, however, touched her, and there was a feel-

ing as if her tears must soon pass the barrier which had kept them back so long. Opening her father's letter at last she began to read it. John Rathburn was a man of few words, and his letter was characteristic of the man. It was as follows:

"MY CHILD,—I write to say that you are very welcome to come back to such as I have to give you. It is not like what you have been accustomed to, and I would make it better if I could. I guess you will get used to us in time, although we are plain, homely folks at the best. But Nannie is here and you will like Nannie. Come as soon as you please.

Your father,

JOHN RATHBURN."

Marguerite felt that every word of this letter came from an honest heart, which meant what it said, and yet it was a little disappointing; she had expected something warmer from her father, for surely the man who had kissed her so lovingly and held her so carefully upon the ox's back, must have in his nature something more affectionate and demonstrative than his letter would indicate.

"But he is much older now, and has not seen me for so long," she thought, as she read the brief lines again, seeing now more in them than she had at first, and understanding in a way what Nannie was to him, while there came over her a shadowy feeling of what Nannie was to be to her.

She took her mother's letter next, and as she tore open the envelope there fell into her lap a cutting from a newspaper, which she saw was a poem. "Your Aunt Agnes writes poetry under the *nom de*

plume of *Senga*, her name spelled backwards," her mother had once said to her, and something in the tone, and the glimmer of a smile which accompanied the words, told the lady's opinion of *Senga's* poetry, which Marguerite had fully indorsed, after reading a few clippings which Agnes had occasionally sent her in Nannie's letters. "Very ordinary," was the verdict she pronounced upon them, and then she forgot them entirely. This one, however, she glanced at with more interest than usual. It was the one on which Agnes had been engaged when Nannie came from the Pines and startled her by her vehement questionings of Marguerite, and as it was really her best, she had now enclosed it as a proof of her talent, and love for her eldest born. Marguerite ran her eye over it hastily, and then turned to the letter, which was as different from what her father's had been as the woman was different from the man.

"My precious daughter," it began. "Neither words can tell, nor pen portray the joy it is to me, your mother, to be able at last to call you my daughter, my child, for whom I have mourned all these long years as only a fond mother can mourn for the nestling which, although not dead, is as surely lost to her. Oh, Marguerite, my darling, what I have suffered since the day I let you go, and watched you out of sight with a breaking heart, you can never guess. But the long night is over, the dawn is near at hand when I can clasp you in my feeble arms and call you mine again. I wish we had a better home for you to come to, but such a wish is vain and I will put it aside. I have known

poverty and ill health all my life, and been so crippled and dwarfed thereby, for all my aspirations are after something higher and better than what I have around me, the dreary monotony of a poor farmer's struggle for bread. What you have seen and enjoyed, I, too, could have enjoyed so much, but it was not to be. My place was here in the humble home to which we are so soon to welcome you, and my heart bounds with a great gladness as I anticipate the many talks I shall have with a person of culture and education, and how I shall be strengthened mentally and possibly physically, for the health of the body depends largely upon the health of the mind. I am such a helpless invalid,—not able to walk except as I am supported on either side, and for the most part I now keep my bed, reading whatever I can get to read, and using my pen whenever the inspiration comes to cheer me in my solitude.

"You know, of course, that I have written many years under the name of *Senga*, and excuse me for saying it, I think I have quite a little fame as a writer of pathetic verse. Pathos is my forte, and, situated as I am, with my whole soul in revolt against my surroundings, how can I be a merry writer? Oh, no, the soul must speak of what it feels, and in my heart there is constantly a moan of regret for the something missed from my life. I enclose you a little poem, which speaks for itself, and was written the day Nannie came to me, flushed and angry, and demanding why I had so long kept your identity as her sister from her. In my excitement I poured out my longing for you upon paper, with the result you see, which result I am happy to say has proved my very best effort, and netted me more money than any article I have yet written.

"Dear Nannie is so practical and so good, too, and we could not live without her. I trust you and she will be great friends. I know you and I shall

be; I feel it, as I feel many things in a kind of psychological, or theosophical way, whichever you choose to name it, and I can scarcely wait for the brightness which is to crown my later life.

"With kind regards to your Aunt Amy, whose hope of heaven, I trust, grows stronger as her earthly ties grow weak and fade away, I am, lovingly, your mother, hungering for a sight of your dear face.

AGNES MONCTON RATHBURN."

Marguerite read this gushing effusion with a stupefied kind of feeling, wondering if the writer were crazy, or weak, or both. All the sentimentality was lost on her, and she felt that her father's letter, brief as it had been, far outweighed this labored effort at fine writing,—this cry of a hungry soul for what it had missed so long!

"And yet she is my mother, and there is a commandment with regard to mothers, and I mean to keep it, too," she said as she folded the letter and glanced again at the poem, which she understood better now that she knew the circumstances under which it was written.

There was still Nannie's letter, and she read it eagerly, with a feeling that this, like her father's, was sincere, with nothing put on for effect.

"Dear Sister," it began, "how I wish I could tell you how sorry I am for you to lose so much all at once. It must be dreadful, and I have cried for you many times, and prayed a great deal that God will comfort you at last, when the worst of all happens, as I suppose it must, and you lose the only mother you ever knew. If I could help you I would, and share the pain with you. But I can't

I can only stay here and wait till it is over, and you ready to come home. Oh, how glad I am for myself, Marguerite, that you are coming, and I can call you sister. It seems to me the sweetest name in the whole world. I used to long so for one, and still, when last summer I accidentally heard that you were mine, it almost broke my heart. Not because I was sorry, but because I seemed somehow to feel all at once what I had missed so many years, and the house and my room were so lonely, and things were harder to bear for a while. Then I got over it, though I never called you cousin again. I couldn't do that, for it would be a lie after I knew you were my sister. How many times I have said that word when alone, *sister*, *sister* Marguerite, and how I do hope you will not be very miserable in our home. It is not a bit like anything you have ever had. We are poor, and father works so hard, and mother is sick in bed most of the time. Still it is very nice here when the grass is green and the flowers out, and I shall do everything I can think of to make you happy, and perhaps you will love me some, although I am nothing but a little misshapen girl, while you are so queenly and beautiful. I know that from your picture and what Dr. Catheron told me. He saw you in New York, and in Paris, too. I think he is splendid, and he comes here quite often to see mother, and is so kind and good. He has a lovely place they call "The Pines," and Miss Alice Grainger, his step-sister, lives there with her mother. She is a great lady like you, although a little queer, and I think has consumption. Poor thing, so young to die, and engaged to Dr. Catheron, too. I hope you and she will be friends, so you can go often to "The Pines," which will seem better to you than our plain red house. I am hurrying to get a new rag carpet woven ready for your room, which I shall make as pretty as I can. Jack is making some brackets for you with his jig saw, which I am sure

will please you. He sends his respects, and would write, only he is a boy and bashful, and says he never knew you, so I hope you will not mind. He is a good brother, although rather droll, but when you know him you will like him. Mother is more refined than I am, and writes poetry, and is anticipating a great deal of pleasure in your society. Father is very quiet, and you never know what he thinks; but he is good as gold, and very kind to me, as everybody is. So, good-bye, dear Marguerite, until I see you,

"Your loving sister,

"NANNIE."

Before this letter was finished the hot tears were running like rain down Marguerite's cheeks. The pressure on her brain had given way to Nannie's simple pathos, and amid her sobs, which were almost hysterical, she said, "Darling Nannie, I am glad I have *you*. I will bear up for your sake, and make the best of whatever comes to me."

Marguerite was a good deal more composed after reading this letter, and the future did not look quite so dreary to her, while in her heart there was, unconsciously, perhaps, a feeling of satisfaction in knowing that Dr. Catheron lived so near, and was a frequent visitor at her father's house. He was like her world, and Alice Grainger must be like it, also, and with two people of her kind she would not be left wholly desolate.

CHAPTER XVII.

HARRY.

Two days later, the *Etruria* unloaded her passengers at the wharf, and the next morning at about eleven o'clock Mrs. Bellamy's coupé was standing before the Windsor, while in the Rathburn parlor Mrs. Bellamy was greeting Marguerite effusively, and talking very rapidly, first of the voyage, which had been so rough, and of her sea-sickness, which had been so terrible—of the present she had brought to Marguerite, and her own fine dresses, and then she inquired for Mrs. Rathburn, and told Marguerite to keep up good courage, as she was sure her mother was not so low as she supposed, and would undoubtedly get well. Doctors did not always know their business. From all she had heard she should say that she herself had once been quite as bad.

"And look, how well I am. It requires a little will power, that is all. Can I go to her at once?"

During this monopolizing of Marguerite, Harry, who had accompanied his mother, was leaning against the mantel, with his hands jammed into his pockets and a very dissatisfied expression on his handsome, boyish face, as he wondered if the conference would never end, and Marguerite give him some attention. She was looking pale and banged up, he thought, and he was sorry for her, and wondered why Mrs. Rathburn needed to be ill and spoil his fun, and the moment his mother left them to go to

the sick room and she turned towards him, he stretched out his arms and drawing her to him kissed her many times, while he said, a little complainingly, "Now, Madge, it's my turn. Why, I don't believe you have even looked at me, or acted a bit glad to have me with you again, and I dying to see you. I wonder if you can guess how lonesome I have been since you left me in Paris, or how long the time has seemed."

He was kissing her as he talked, and Marguerite felt her heart swelling in her throat as it had done the day she learned the secret she must now impart to Harry.

"Upon my soul, I don't believe you have kissed me once. What makes you act so shy and funny, and try to wriggle away from me? Aren't you glad to see me?" he continued, and then Marguerite found her voice and said, "Yes, Harry, very glad, but something dreadful has happened, which I must tell you, and then you will never wish me to kiss you again. But please let me go. You strangle me so that I can't talk, with your arm around my neck like that. I am going to give you back your freedom. I can never be your wife."

She had writhed herself loose from his encircling arms, and sitting down upon the sofa motioned him to stay at the other end.

"Don't touch me again, please, till I have told you," she said. "We are beggars, mother and I. Everything is gone, everything, and we haven't a dollar left, or shall not have when the bills are paid, and perhaps not enough to pay them."

"Is that all?" Harry exclaimed, winding his

arm again around her and laying her head upon his shoulder, while he smoothed her face and hair, and kissed her quivering lips. "Do you think I chose you for your money, Madge? I am not such a cad as that; money is a good thing, to be sure, and I don't suppose I shall have an overplus of it, for mother has notified me that her bags are not very full. But don't you fret, we shall live somehow, though maybe we can't go to Europe every year, or to Newport. But I can be happy anywhere with you, and don't you think you were a little previous in giving a fellow his send off the way you did? Eh, Madge?"

It would have been very sweet to Marguerite to sit there as she was sitting, with Harry's arm around her while she listened to his words of love and constancy, had there not been more to tell and had she not known his mother, who ruled him so completely, and whose boast it was that no Bellamy or Grady (her own side of the house) had ever married beneath them, or worked for a living. The danger to herself lay not so much with the son, as with the mother, who was proud of her blood, and proud of her money, and proud of her pride, and whose influence over Harry was so great. Intuitively, too, she felt that she had not told him the part which would affect him more than the loss of her money.

"Wait, Harry," she said, trying again to disengage herself from him. "There is more to tell, a great deal more. I am not the person you have thought me to be. I am not mamma's daughter at all. I am somebody else."

"Not your mother's daughter! Somebody else! What do you mean?" Harry asked, completely

mystified, while Marguerite succeeded in freeing herself from him a second time, and standing up before him, went on rapidly: "I am Mrs. James Rathburn's adopted daughter, given to her when I was about four years old, and I never knew it till day before yesterday, when she told me all. My father is Mr. John Rathburn, Mr. James' brother. He is a poor farmer, who has always lived at Rocky Point among the mountains between Pittsfield and Albany. You were once at the Mountain House with your mother, and you may have seen him when he came there to sell vegetables and eggs, for he does that and anything else to get a living, as he is very poor, and when mamma dies I am going back to him to be poor, too, and maybe peddle eggs and potatoes as he does, or at all events to be poor like him; and now you know why I can never be your wife. Mrs. Harry Bellamy must come of better stock than a plain New England farmer."

She had put the facts before him in all their glaring nakedness, and for a moment Harry recoiled from them. He could bear the loss of money with equanimity, but the loss of position was a different thing, for he was steeped to the dregs in his mother's aristocratic ideas, and caste was everything to him. Naturally one of the kindest hearted young men in the world, and always the gentleman, he would just as readily give up his seat in a street car to the shop girl carrying a band-box as to the daughter of a millionaire, and if necessary would be just as polite and attentive to her, but in his mind there was an impassable gulf between him and the

shop girl, while to marry out of his set was something he had never for a moment contemplated. He was a Bellamy and Grady both, and both were ancient families, one from the South and one from the North, with the bluest kind of blood in their veins, and it was not for him to be the first to adulterate it. Such had been his ideas up to the present time, and it is not strange that he should shrink from a father-in-law who sold vegetables and eggs at the Mountain House where he had thought to spend a part of his honeymoon, and who might at any time claim him as a son before some of his fashionable world. For a young man of twenty-three, Harry had had a good many *affaires du cœur*, but as none of them had been quite agreeable to his mother, they had not lasted long, or struck very deep, until he met Marguerite, who, being a much stronger nature than himself, influenced and mastered him as no one else had done, while best of all he had his mother's full approval of the match, so that nothing had disturbed the blissful tenor of his wooing, except Marguerite's occasional "rubbing him the wrong way," as he termed it, when she tried to rouse him into action of some kind, or rather into thinking and acting for himself, independent of his mother's opinion.

Marguerite was very dear to him and very necessary, too, for she knew how to bring out all the best there was in him, and although he naturally leaned upon her and always would do so, the leaning would be to his advantage and make him a more capable and self-reliant man. This he fully understood, and after a moment's silence and a long-drawn breath,

in which he buried his pride forever, he, too, rose up, and taking Marguerite's hands in his, said, in the most earnest, manly tones she had ever heard from him:

"Madge, what do you take me for, a sneaking cad, or what? and do you think my love for you so light a thing that the accident of birth, or loss of money, can destroy it? No, by Jove, a fellow who would go back on a girl for that, ought to be kicked, and branded a sneak on his forehead. I am not that kind, and if your father should sell a ton of eggs, and bad ones at that, right before my face and eyes, I'd stick to you, and swear they were good! So don't talk any more nonsense about giving me my freedom. I don't want it. I won't have it. I want you, and if mother thinks best we will be married at once, and Mrs. Grundy never need to know that you are not Mrs. James Rathburn's daughter."

"Harry," Marguerite said, speaking now very steadily, "you are very kind and good, but it cannot be. I understand things better than you do, and more as you will understand them a week hence, and as to Mrs. Grundy, she must know sooner or later, and the sooner the better. I have lived a lie too long, innocently, of course, as I did not know, but now that I do know, I shall not deny my parentage. For the future I am John Rathburn's daughter and shall stand by my family. You cannot marry me without identifying yourself in a measure with them, and this is contrary to anything there is in your nature or training. No, Harry, it is better that we should be strangers to each other. Our lives will be so different after mamma dies. Yours in your

world, and mine—in the country farm-house, where I belong, and where I am sure there is not actual want, but poverty, as you esteem it. It is very sweet in you to say what you do, and it will make the future brighter than if you had turned from me in disgust. I shall be glad to have you for my friend, but I cannot be your wife. I know you better than you know yourself, and,—excuse me,—I know your mother, too."

"But, Madge," Harry began again, just as the door opened, and Mrs. Bellamy came in, looking a good deal ruffled and excited, and out of sorts.

She had found her friend much worse than she had expected, and had seen at a glance that she could not live. They had been life-long friends, she and Mrs. Rathburn, school girls together in Nashville, when both were young, and nothing had ever come up to mar the harmony of their friendship, although there had sometimes been an interval of years during which they did not see each other. And now, at the sight of the white, pinched face, where death had put his seal, Mrs. Bellamy gave way, and sitting down beside her dying friend, she took the cold, damp hands in hers and tried to articulate some words of hope and comfort. But Mrs. Rathburn shook her head and said, "No, Grace, it is now a mere matter of days, possibly hours, before I am dead, but I wanted to live till you came. I have something to tell you concerning Marguerite."

Then, as rapidly as possible, she told the story to the woman of the world, who looked and felt as if turning into stone, as she listened to it, with a thought of Harry constantly in her mind, and a

troubled conviction that she might find him hard to deal with. For deal with him she must. A Bellamy and Grady must not wed a penniless girl, who, to her poverty, added the enormity of having no family. The thing was impossible, and it would require all her tact to meet the difficulty. But she made no sign to Mrs. Rathburn, except as the tightening of her lips and the pallor of her face betrayed her, and when, as she rose to go, the latter said to her appealingly, "You will see to Marguerite a little after I am dead," she answered, "Certainly. I shall do what is for the best."

There was not much comfort in that, and the sick woman whispered sadly, "Poor Marguerite," as she saw her friend go out, and guessed what the *best* would be which she meant to do. At a glance Marguerite, who was a quick reader of the human face, saw there was a change, and knew that Mrs. Bellamy had heard everything, while Harry involuntarily withdrew his arm from her waist.

"I found Mrs. Rathburn very bad, and I am sorry for you," Mrs. Bellamy began, "more sorry than I can express, as yours is a triple loss. She told me everything, as I dare say you have told, or will tell Harry."

There was something hard and cold in her voice which roused Marguerite, and in a voice equally cold and proud, she answered, "Yes, I have told Harry that I am penniless and a nobody according to the world I have been trained in. My father is a poor farmer living among the New England hills, and working like a common day laborer for his living, selling fruit and vegetables at the Mountain

House in Rocky Point. I have told Harry all this, and given him back his freedom, knowing as well as you that he cannot marry me now, for I shall stand by my family, and whoever takes me must not ignore them. They are mine, and will in a way be my husband's, too. And now all that I ask is that you will be kind to mamma,—I must still call her that,—until she dies, and don't let her see that you are changed, it will hurt her so. I ask nothing for myself, and expect nothing. I can bear it."

"You are a brave girl," Mrs. Bellamy said, touched by Marguerite's attitude, and fascinated by her wonderful beauty as she stood there, with the brilliant color in her face, the sparkle in her eyes, and her head, which always sat so squarely and well upon her shoulders, held a little more erect than usual.

Surely she was a creature whom a prince might wed and not think himself abased, but Mrs. Bellamy felt herself better than a prince, and although the girl's grace and beauty struck her as it never had before, it did not move her from her purpose, and consulting her watch, she said, "I shall do all I can for your mother, and will see you again to-morrow, but now we must really go, as I have all my trunks to unpack, and am going out to dinner. Come, Harry," and she turned to her son, who, shaking himself together in the way he had of doing when excited, and as a big Newfoundland dog shakes himself after a cold bath, replied, "Yes, mother, I'll go, but not until I have again told Madge that her changed circumstances are nothing to me, except as they affect her. She is my prom-

ised wife, and I will not have it otherwise, and I want you to tell her so, too, for surely you must think as I do."

There was a quick uplifting of Marguerite's eyes, in which the tears were shining, a poise of her head to one side like a bird's when startled, as she waited for Mrs. Bellamy's reply, which was, "This is not the place to discuss such things, my son. We will talk with Marguerite by-and-by;" and then to Marguerite she added in a low tone as she gave her her hand, "You are a sensible girl, my dear, and whatever happens you may be sure of my friendship. I shall come again to-morrow, or send. *Au revoir*," and, gathering her wrap about her shoulders, she left the room.

Harry's parting, however, was a little different. "Good-bye, Madge, till to-morrow," he said, as he kissed her lips, and added, "don't talk such rubbish again, as if I were a weather-cock."

Then he, too, went out, and Marguerite was alone, with a feeling of certainty that the tie between herself and Harry would be broken by his mother, if she did not break it herself. "Which I shall do," she said proudly. "I can bear a great deal, if I try, and neither Mrs. Bellamy, nor any one, shall ever know the pain it costs me, or how I shrink from the only home I shall have in a few days. God help me, and forgive me, and make me feel some love for those people, my father and mother and Jack and Nannie. Oh, Nannie! I believe I *do* love you *now*," she moaned, involuntarily, stretching out her hands as if to take those of the little girl who was to be so

much to her and who, at that very moment was thinking of her and planning how to make her home coming as pleasant as possible.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE END.

"Did you tell Harry?" Mrs. Rathburn whispered, as Marguerite sat by her side in the late afternoon, now wiping the cold perspiration from the pallid face and now administering the medicine which she knew could do no good except to keep up strength to the last.

"Yes, mamma, I told him."

"And he said?' the dim eyes finished the question, which Marguerite answered quickly. "Just what any impulsive young man would say,—that he should not give me up; but he had not seen his mother, then. He thinks differently now, nor can I blame him; for what has a Bellamy to do with a penniless girl, of whose family he would be ashamed, and from which he would keep aloof. No, mamma, my husband, if I ever have one, shall seek me knowing just what I am. You told Mrs. Bellamy. You know her opinion."

"Yes," Mrs. Rathburn answered. "I told her, and she said nothing; but I read her thoughts in her face. She is very proud and hard. Oh, my child, I wish there had been no secret, but I did

it for the best, and now you must pay the penalty. But remember how much I loved you and how happy you have made me. Bear everything bravely, and, if possible, do not add any burden to a household which, I fear, has already too many to bear. They are very respectable people, and they are yours. Nothing can undo that, and Nannie is very sweet. Dr. Catheron told me so. I asked him of her that time he was here, before you came into my room. He was almost as enthusiastic about her as if she had been his sister."

Marguerite did not answer, and Mrs. Rathburn continued: "Nannie will be your stay and comfort, as you must be hers, and in trying to do right and make others happy you will in time be happy yourself. I have arranged everything with my physician, who knows just what to do after I am dead, and how to get his pay. My jewelry is all in his possession, and if there is anything left after the bills are paid it will be sent to you. You will telegraph to Rocky Point the day before you expect to reach there, and —and—kiss me now, my darling. I am very tired, and things are getting mixed. I am going to my husband and the little child who died and was buried in the sea. Remember how I loved you, and be brave."

For hours Marguerite sat by the dying woman, who occasionally whispered, "Kiss me once more, and be brave," and then all was over, and when the next morning Harry came, there was an undertaker in the sick room, while Marguerite sat alone in the salon with dry eyes and a blanched face, which did not change at all in its expression when he sat down

beside her, and said, "My poor Madge, I am so sorry for you. But you must get out of this and go home with me. I will call a carriage at once. This is no place for you."

Then she roused herself, and said, "No, Harry, I shall stay here till they take mamma away. Then I am going home to my real father and mother, who will be glad to see me. They are waiting for me; they have written to me; they are mine."

She said this last proudly, as if she would thus keep up her courage, and be *brave*, as her lost mother had bidden her to be. They were hers, and no word should ever betray to Harry, or any one, that she was not glad of the relationship. She thanked him for his repeated declaration that she must go home with him, and when he saw he could not move her he left her, and went back to his mother, whom he found in her room absorbed in the Paris finery, all of which had not yet been unpacked.

"I have been to the Windsor, and Mrs. Rathburn is dead," he said, "and there is a lot of strange people there, and the doctor giving orders, and Marguerite is alone. She must come here, of course. I tried to bring her, but she refused. If you go to her, however, she will come."

"Come *here*, did you say? Why come here?" Mrs. Bellamy asked, her hands shaking a little as she took from her trunk, and spread upon the bed a lace dress, her last extravagance at Worth's.

"Because she has nowhere else to go, and she can't stay there alone in that hotel, and because she is to be my wife, and your daughter," Harry answered hotly, while his mother went on smoothing

out the bows of ribbon on her lace gown, feeling the while that common decency required that she should bring to her house for a few days at least the daughter of her old friend.

And they had been such friends, she and Mrs. Rathburn, both as school girls in New Orleans, and later in life, when they had met in Europe, and renewed the friendship of their youth.

"Yes, I will bring Marguerite here till her mother is buried, and then she will, of course, go to her people, and *you* must forget her," she said at last, very slowly and decidedly.

"I won't do it," was the boyish answer. "I'm not such a sneak as to forsake a girl because she happens to be poor," he continued, stalking up and down the room to the great peril of some of the flimsy articles upon the floor.

"Do, Harry, see what you are doing. You'll step on my calling bonnet next," Mrs. Bellamy said, as she gathered up her treasures, and continued, "You do not forsake her because *she* is poor, but because *you* are poor, and cannot take care of her. We are far from being rich, and it is absolutely necessary that you should marry money, or go to work, which you can't do."

"Yes, I can, too, and I'll go to-day and hire out as clerk at Arnold's, or Lord and Taylor's, or, better yet, at the Mountain House, where I shall be near Madge," Harry said, angrily, and his mother replied, "Nobody will hire you after one look at you, and suppose you actually were at the Mountain House, how would you enjoy seeing your father-in-law come

driving his cart to the door with vegetables and chickens to sell?"

Harry declared that he should not care a picayune, and insisted that his mother should go at once for Marguerite and bring her to their house. It required a good deal of persuasion on Mrs. Bellamy's part before Marguerite would consent to leave the hotel. But she yielded at last, knowing that it was as the daughter of the late Mrs. Rathburn, and not as a future daughter-in-law that she was received at No. — Madison Square, where every possible attention was paid to her, for Mrs. Bellamy never did anything by halves. Marguerite was her guest, and she treated her with the utmost kindness, and went with her to Greenwood, where Mrs. Rathburn was buried, and invited her to stay with her as long as she liked before going to Rocky Point. But she took good care that she was never for a moment alone with Harry, who had no opportunity more than to look what he could not speak before his mother, and who chafed and raged like a young lion under the surveillance, swearing he would go with her to Rocky Point, and thus prove his allegiance to her, and see her family for himself. But this plan was given up, and on the day of her departure he only accompanied her as far as the station, and bought her ticket for her, and *Harper's Monthly*, and a bouquet of flowers, and, unmindful of his mother's presence, kissed her at the last, and told her he should write to her every day, and see her before summer was over.

And in her loneliness and desolation Marguerite did not repel him as she meant to do when her pride

was in the ascendant. He was something to cling to, —was all of the old life she had left to her, and her eyes flashed their gratitude upon him as she bade him good-bye.

"I am truly sorry for you," Mrs. Bellamy said, when she took Marguerite's hand, "but I dare say you will be happy with your people when you get accustomed to them. I shall always be your friend, and I trust you as a sensible girl to do what you must know is for the best."

Marguerite knew perfectly what all this meant, and held herself very erect as she answered, "I understand you, Mrs. Bellamy, and shall certainly do what I think is right. But don't pity me, please, except for the loss of mamma. Why should you? I am only going home to my own father and mother. Good-bye."

She took her seat in the train with a feeling that among all the passengers there was not one more desolate than herself, and wished she, too, were lying in Greenwood beside the only mother she had ever known. It was the first time she had traveled without a maid, or escort of some kind, but she did not mind that. It was rather a relief to be alone, with no one to speak to, and after a time she began to get interested in the scenery, especially after the change was made at Springfield, and they were climbing the mountains between that city and Albany.

"Be brave, and do not add an extra burden to a household which, I fear, has already too many to bear," her mother had said to her, and the words

were ringing in her ears when Rocky Point was called by the brakeman, and she stepped out upon the platform from the old life into the new.

CHAPTER XIX.

GETTING READY FOR MARGUERITE.

When it was known in the neighborhood that Marguerite Rathburn was coming back to the farm-house to stay, and coming penniless, for her father had told the whole truth, there was far more talk than when she went away. What would the family do with a fine city lady, the people said, and what would she do with them, and hadn't John Rathburn about as big a load as he could carry without this extra expense laid upon him, for, of course, she would be an expense, brought up as she had been to do nothing and expect everything? Would they keep a girl to wait upon her, or would this task fall upon Nannie, who was overworked now, and could not stand much more? Would it have the effect to rouse up Mrs. Rathburn, or would she be more airy than ever, and flood them with more poetry? And so they talked, with no pity for Marguerite, whose sun had set so suddenly, but with great sympathy for Nannie, who wanted none of it, and was never happier in her life than when getting ready for her sister's coming. The house had been cleaned in April as clean as soap and water and the hands of

Sally Marsh, the woman hired for such occasions, could clean it, but Nannie, in whose presence a fly scarcely dared to buzz, went over with some part of it again, giving special attention to the room intended for Marguerite. This had been her own, and was a corner room, with a southern exposure and a fire-place in it, and windows which looked out upon the valley and the mountains in the distance. Nannie was fond of her room, where on summer nights she could see the moon as it rose up over the hills and then looked in upon her as she lay in her bed, often too tired to sleep, but happy so long as the moon and the stars were her companions. In the morning, too, she could see the first rays of sunlight gilding the tops of the trees, and watch the crimson and golden hues spreading over the sky, wondering what lay above and beyond it all, and if heaven were not there, and God's throne, of which she thought so much. But Nannie was not at all selfish, and because this chamber was so pleasant and airy she would give it to Marguerite, and move her own belongings into a small room adjoining, which communicated with it by a door. Of this plan Mrs. Rathburn approved, for so long as *her* premises were not invaded, she was willing that the best of everything should be given to Marguerite. Mr. Rathburn seldom troubled himself about Nannie's own personal affairs, and said nothing, and when Nannie asked if they couldn't afford some new paper for the walls, as that which was on them was old and dingy, he said he guessed they could, and when Jack called Nan a fool for giving her room to *Margret*, who wouldn't thank her for it, he told him "he'd

better let Nan be happy in her own way, and if she wanted to stand on her head, let her, and not worry her to death."

So Jack followed his father's advice, and after a little became almost as much interested in the room as Nannie herself. He turned out some brackets and frames with his jig saw, he helped Nannie paper the room, for after the paper was bought the funds were too low to have a hanger; he put down the rag carpet, for which Nannie had been cutting rags for a long time, and which, as it was unusually bright with some design in the weaving, she considered quite a work of art, and a great improvement upon the faded old ingrain, which had done duty somewhere in the house since she could remember. By turning and patching and darning and cutting down this would do for the small room she was to occupy, but for Marguerite nothing could be too good. Nannie was quite an architect in her way, and under her supervision Jack constructed a wide lounge, which Nannie upholstered, covering it with some light, pretty chintz, which harmonized with the paper. The bureau and bedstead, both older than herself, troubled her greatly, and she thought many times of a pretty chamber set she had seen in Millville, but which, though only thirty dollars, was far beyond their means.

"If I could do something to cover them up a little," she said to herself, and then suddenly she thought of Alice Grainger, whose tastes were so artistic, and who had seen so much of the world.

She could suggest many things, and one day after the papering was done, the lounge covered and the

carpet down, Nannie went to the Pines and asked for Alice, whom she found in bed, where most of her time was now passed. There was an unnatural expression in her restless eyes, which, however, brightened at sight of Nannie, but grew gloomy and almost fierce when Nannie told of her perplexity, and asked if she could suggest anything to make Marguerite's room attractive.

"No, I can't," she said, hotly, "and I wouldn't, if I could. Guy told me she was coming, and looked so pleased. I know what was in his mind, and has always been there since he first saw her in Paris. If it were your room, I could tell you a thousand things, but for her's, never! I hate her!"

She looked like a little fury, and Nannie gazed at her for a moment in speechless astonishment, understanding better than she had ever done before that Alice was really jealous of Marguerite because Dr. Catheron had called her beautiful. It was very seldom that Nannie lost her temper, but she did so now, and answered back almost as hotly as Alice had spoken to her.

"Aren't you ashamed to speak so of Marguerite, whom you have never seen, and who has done you no harm? Are you jealous because the doctor said she was beautiful? She is beautiful, and she is *my* sister, and I won't hear her abused, and you have no cause to be jealous either, for she is engaged to a Mr. Harry Bellamy, whom she loves very much, and if you hate her, you hate me, and I'll not stay here another minute, nor come again to see you."

Nannie had never been so angry in her life as when she finished speaking, and started to leave the

room, while, in an agony of contrition, Alice cried out, "Nannie, Nannie, come back. I didn't mean it, or if I did, I don't now, and I'm so sorry. Come back."

But Nannie's blood was up, and she neither stopped nor turned her head until two slender arms were thrown around her neck, and she felt Alice's breath in her face.

"See what you have done," Alice said. "You made me jump out of bed when they say I must keep quiet, if I would live. I shall spit blood,—I know I shall,—and die quicker because of it, and you will have done it. Stay, Nannie, stay. I'm not jealous now. I didn't know she was engaged. Oh, Nannie, don't you see what I am? Have you never guessed that I am not like you? Help me back, I am so weak and dizzy. Yes, I'll tell you everything. What is it you want to know?"

"Not now. Wait till you are stronger," Nannie said, her own heart full of remorse as she helped the sick girl to her bed, and covered her with the rich India shawl it was her fancy to have over her because Guy had bought it in Paris for her mother.

But Alice would not let her go, and was so loving and sweet and sorry that Nannie yielded at last, and explained what she wanted, while Alice entered heart and soul into everything, declaring she would ride down to the farmhouse and see the room and superintend the furnishing, if Nannie would let her.

"I was jealous," she said, with a little laugh. "I once told you I had presentiments, and one of them was that Marguerite would come *here* when I am gone, as I soon shall be. I know it now, for mother

has the same as admitted it, and I have read it in Guy's face, and—and—it is better so, I suppose. If you never guessed, I can't tell you, only that it is better to die than to be a care and pain to Guy and mother. I didn't want Marguerite here, because she is so superior to me, and when Guy contrasted us, he would give the preference to her, and that I couldn't bear. But if she is engaged, that's another thing. Yes, I'll tell you. Is it the old bureau which troubles you? Cover it over with chintz like the lounge, and put a ribbon bow in the centre of each drawer. Make a board frame for the canopy, this shape," and she motioned with her hands. "Cover with chintz, and hang over it white muslin drapery, with fluted ruffles for a border, and loop it back from the glass with ribbons. I saw one like that, and it was *lovely*. Cover the sides and foot-board of the bedstead with the same chintz, and have a canopy for the head, just like the one over the bureau. Sash curtains for the lower half of the windows, with long white muslin ones, tied back with ribbons. Did you say a *rag* carpet?" and Alice's brow puckered in wrinkles of disgust.

But Nannie did not notice this; her thoughts were so intent upon the directions with regard to the windows, and bedstead, and bureau, which she feared she could not carry out. Alice was very tired by this time, and Nannie said to her, "Thank you for telling me so much, and now I must go, but not until you have forgiven me for the angry things I said. Nothing but Marguerite could have roused me like that, and I am so sorry; it was very wicked in me."

Alice's kisses were proofs of her entire forgiveness, and promising to come again soon and report her success, Nannie hurried away, meeting in the hall with Dr. Catheron, who was on his way to Alice.

"Why, Allie," he exclaimed, as he saw her flushed face, "what has excited you so much? What has happened?"

Alice was more like a child than ever since her last illness, and bursting into tears she repeated all which had passed between herself and Nannie.

"I was so jealous of Marguerite," she sobbed, "and so sure that she would take my place some day when I am dead, or have passed out of your life as completely as if I had never been in it, and it made me hate her, because I was sure she was better suited to you than I am, and you would think so, and be glad in a way that I was gone. I would so much rather that, if some one must take my place, it should be an inferior, and not one like Marguerite. But she is engaged; Nannie told me so, and you,—oh, Guy,—you do love me, weak and sick as I am."

Dr. Catheron's face was very grave as he listened to Alice's confession, which was made with her head upon his arm, while he stroked her wavy hair. He did not tell her that he loved her, but he kissed her as a brother might kiss a darling sister, and said to her, "Dear little Allie, how you have distressed yourself unnecessarily. You must be careful. Excitement like this is very bad for you, if you want to get well."

"I do, I do,— oh, Guy,—I want to get well to be your wife, and I am going to like Marguerite,"

Allie sobbed, and then, after a moment, with a wonderful amount of cheerfulness and enthusiasm, she told the doctor about the bureau, and bedstead, and curtains, and rag carpet, the last of which she so despised. "It is not likely Marguerite ever saw such a thing," she said, "and just think what a fall from Axminster and Moquette to *rags!* Ugh! I can't bear it. I have one hundred and fifty dollars in my purse for which I have no use. Will you take it and get a carpet such as will suit Marguerite while she is at the farm-house, and will be Nannie's when she is gone?"

"No, Allie, no, no," the doctor said decidedly. "I cannot do that. It would be an insult to the Rathburns, who are not objects of charity. I have seen Nannie cutting rags for a carpet at intervals for more than a year, and there is so much of herself in it that if there is any nobleness in Marguerite's nature she will prize it more than the costliest Axminster, which would be sadly out of place in the farm-house."

And with Guy's decision Alice was obliged to yield, but she declared her intention to have a superintendance over the furnishing of the room, about which she changed her mind two or three times before night, and the next mornig despatched Evans to the farm-house with a note full of directions exactly contrary to those given the day before, and one of which was that the chintz must be blue and white, instead of crimson and buff. Evans found Nannie hard at work upon the bureau, with her mouth full of pins, while Jack stood by with his mouth full of tacks, a hammer in his hand, and a blood blister

on his thumb. After leaving the Pines Nannie had gone to the store in Rocky Point, where she was fortunate to find the required amount of chintz, together with muslin and ribbons for the curtains. This she had bought and paid for with the last dollar of the butter and egg money she had been saving for a cream-colored gown such as so many young girls wore, and which she greatly coveted.

"But I would rather have Marguerite's room pretty than all the cream-colored gowns in the world. My old navy blue and my white cambric will do me very well for the summer, and by fall I can save some more money," she said to Jack, as she told him what she had done, and was going to do, and what she expected him to do.

"Nan, you are an idiot," Jack replied, as he pushed his torn straw hat to the back of his head, where he usually wore it, a style which gave him the look of Whittier's barefoot boy, except that he was older. "Yes, you are a fool to spend so much time, and work, and all your money on *Margret*, who won't appreciate it. What does she care for a bureau dressed up like a rag baby?"

"I wish you'd say *Marguerite*. I am sure she will like it better than *Margret*," was Nannie's answer, at which Jack began to whistle his favorite air, "Capt. Jenks of the Horse Marines."

But he helped Nannie with the bureau, showing nearly as much taste and skill as she did herself, so that the upholstery was progressing rapidly, when Evans appeared with Alice's letter, which greatly distressed and bewildered her.

"But how can I change now, when the chintz is

bought and cut up and half on," she said, while Evans, to whom she explained the dilemma, comforted her by saying that it did not at all matter what her young mistress ordered to-day, as she was sure to change her mind to-morrow.

This was true, and every morning for a week Evans came regularly to the house with the most contradictory orders, to which Nannie paid no heed, but worked steadily on at the first idea until her work was done and pronounced perfect by Evans, and Dr. Catheron, and Mrs. Rathburn, whom the doctor took up in his arms to see it, and who indulged in a few sentimental tears as she regretted that she could not give her first born surroundings more like what she had been accustomed to. Even Mr. Rathburn said it was "fine as a fiddle," while Nannie regarded it with a species of adoration, because it was to be Marguerite's, and on the night after a telegram came from Harry Bellamy, saying, "Miss Rathburn will reach Rocky Point to-morrow on the half-past three train," she sat for a long time in the pretty room, looking sometimes out into the moonlight and sometimes upon her handiwork, which represented so much love and hard work, and so many prayers, too, for always, when an article had been completed, whether bedstead, or bureau, or window, or lounge, Nannie had knelt beside it and prayed in her simple, childish way, that Marguerite might like it, and be happy in her new home. And so great was her faith in prayer that she believed it would be so, and although so tired that her back ached with pain, she did not think of it at all, as she walked around the room,

touching each object as if in benediction, and whispering to it, "She is coming to-morrow."

Then, going to the bed, she pressed her lips upon the pillows where Marguerite's head was to rest, and whose snowy covering she had herself washed and ironed, thinking it would be almost desecration for old Sally Marsh, who did their washing, to touch anything so sacred.

"Good-night," she said at last, with an involuntary curtsey, as she heard the clock strike eleven, and going to her own plainly furnished room, which had been stripped of everything which could add to Marguerite's, she was soon asleep, with a look on her face like that of an angel in some of the old pictures.

CHAPTER XX.

MARGUERITE ARRIVES.

Nannie was up very early the next morning, and in the kitchen before her father had the fire made.

"Why, Nan," he said, as she came upon him while he was putting the kindlings in the stove, "how pale you look. Why didn't you stay in bed a spell?"

"Oh, I couldn't," she answered. "*She* is coming to-day, you know, and there is so much to do."

"And, s'posin' there is; I wouldn't make such a *to do* about it," came from Jack, who just then appeared in the outer door, with his overalls on all splashed and wet as if they had been doing good service.

Jack, too, had risen early, and had rubbed and groomed old Pedler, the family horse, who was so named because he had carried so many vegetables to the Mountain House and the market, and butter to so many customers.

"Spruce up, old chap. You are to come to great honor to-day, Nan thinks. You are to bring Miss Rathburn from the depot," he said, as he patted the horse's head and gave him an extra amount of hay and meal.

Then he turned his attention to the two-seated covered vehicle which his father had bought at an auction a few years before, and which, as it looked a little like a baker's cart, he had dubbed the Pie Wagon. This he washed and cleaned thoroughly, brushing the cushions, and the curtains, which he rolled up, saying, when he had finished, "There, Miss Rathburn, I've done the best for you I can, but only to please Nan, mind; only to please Nan. I wonder what you'll think of the old trap, especially when you try to get out of it; Miss Rathburn, indeed!"

Jack had resented the Miss Rathburn in the telegram, as it seemed to put so great a distance between her and them all, and had teased Nannie by saying he was going to call her that when he met her at the depot. He had not expected to find Nannie in the kitchen, and not wishing her to know what he had been doing for fear she would hug him, he slunk out behind the house to divest himself of his overalls, and washed himself by the well, while Nannie prepared the breakfast more rapidly than she had ever done before. She was very much excited, and

Jack laughed at and chaffed her on being so nervous, and told her to "hold her horses and not be in such a whew."

"Don't Jacky, please," she said. "I am in an awful hurry, there is so much to do."

And so there was, for it was baking day and churning day, and the cream and butter had to be attended to as extras. There was the whole house to dust, the fly specks to be wiped from the windows, the finger marks from the doors, the kitchen floor to scrub, and her mother to be soothed and kept quiet, so as to ward off the headache which was threatening, as a result of the welcoming poem over which she had been laboring. In the midst of all this, and just as her bread and biscuit needed her attention, there came from the Pines a democrat wagon, filled with flowers, and a note from Alice telling her not to arrange them "stiff and thick and awkward, but graceful and light and fluffy," and to put quantities of them in Marguerite's room, with ny bouquets in the curtains, and on the pillows a unch of beautiful hothouse roses, which she had ed with a white ribbon. Accompanying the owers was a lovely screen, with satin panels, nbroidered, one with lilies of the valley, one with insies, and one with fuschias. This, Alice said, as a gift from herself to Marguerite, and it was to put before the washstand so as to make a kind of essing-room.

"I have lain awake all night," she wrote, "thinking about the room, and wondering if it is right. erhaps you'd better move the bed to the north, d the bureau to the south, cornerwise, you know,

and the table near the window. Any way, try the effect. I shall send mother and Guy down to-morrow to call. Give my love to your sister, and tell her to come and see me soon, as I can't go to see her.

Lovingly, ALLIE."

Nannie read the note with a feeling of dismay, wondering how she should ever find time to arrange the flowers, and what she should put them in when they were arranged. But Alice's forethought had provided for this, and a box of vases was put upon the table by the coachman, who said "he guessed Miss Grainger was pretty bad that morning, as he heard her saying that she must go to the farm-house to see to things."

Then he went away leaving Nannie in the midst of more flowers than she had ever seen before at one time in her life.

"Oh, what shall I do? The bread will spoil if I leave it now, and how can I stop to make all these into graceful and fluffy bouquets?" she said to Jack, who had appeared on the scene, and was examining the screen, whose use he did not know.

There were tears in Nannie's eyes, and rather than see her cry Jack was willing to do anything, even to trying his hand at making bouquets; so, with a pail of water before him, and Nannie's apron tied round his neck to keep from wetting the clean shirt he had put on that morning, he set to work, and if the bouquets were not altogether graceful and fluffy, they were very good, and Nannie could not find it in her heart to scold her brother, although he slopped half the water on her clean floor, and cut a

big hole in her apron with the scissors. The flowers were finished, and the house was as bright and odorous with their perfume as a garden, while by two o'clock everything was done. The early dinner was cleared away, and the dishes washed. There were loaves of bread, and piles of biscuits upon the pantry shelf, with pans of rusk, and gingerbread, and a loaf of cake, on which Nannie had expended all her skill, and which in lightness and whiteness rewarded her for her pains. Her mother had been attended to, and in her *peignoir* of blue, the color to which she still clung as most becoming to her, she was reclining upon her pillows, under one of which was her hand glass ready for use when the emergency came. She had asked to have her hair curled, but from this Nannie had dissuaded her, saying it was too childish, and would make her look more like Marguerite's sister than her mother.

Mrs. Rathburn, who clung to her youth with great pertinacity, and liked nothing better than to be told how young she looked, submitted to Nannie's judgment, but would not allow her scanty locks to be twisted as her daughter wished to twist them. They must be left loose, she said, thinking they would thus impart to her the air of poetry and idealism which she liked to fancy there was about her.

"Now leave me alone," she said, when all was done, "and, perhaps I can finish the last stanza of 'Welcome to my First-born.' It troubles me more than usual, I am so weak and nervous. But first

drop that curtain, so that my face will be in the shade."

Nannie did as she was bidden, and then went to her own room more tired than she had been before in months. But as it lacked only an hour of train time she could not afford the luxury of a little rest, and was soon dressed in her simple gingham and white apron, with her curls tied with a blue ribbon. She had hesitated some time, and fought quite a battle with her morbid conscience before deciding not to twist her hair into a knot, and fasten it with a long pin, which Jack called a pitch-fork. This would be the true way to subdue the world, the flesh and the devil, she knew, but, on the other hand, she looked so much better with her hair in curls that she began to waver.

"From pride, vain glory and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness, deliver me," she was in the habit of saying many times a day, with a feeling that vanity, if not exactly called by that name, was included in the list which at her confirmation she had promised to renounce. Remembering this she decided at last to twist her hair, when suddenly she recalled what Jack had once said to her when she was writhing under an attack of conscience. "If God hadn't meant your hair to curl, do you s'pose he would have made it as kinky as a nigger's? I wouldn't be a fool!"

That settled the matter for the time being, and her long ringlets were soon covering her shoulders in which there was a twinge of pain, which she thought a punishment for her pride instead of the result of all she had done that day. With one last

look at Marguerite's room, which she thought so pretty and grand, with the satin screen, she went down stairs just as Jack drove the Pie Wagon to the gate and then came in for the dust rug.

"Oh, Jack," she said, "please wear your coat. You surely will not insult Marguerite by meeting her in your shirt sleeves."

Jack said it was too hot for a coat, but he put it on.

"There, now. You look real nice," Nannie said, "and if Marguerite makes a motion to kiss you, kiss her back, that's a good boy."

"Not if I know myself," Jack retorted. "I have never kissed any girl but you, and never mean to. And Margret won't think of such a thing, either,—me, a country lout!"

He was in the Pie Wagon by this time, and on the point of starting, when Nannie called again, "Oh, Jack, if you see any lilies when you reach the pond I'd get some, if I were you, and give to Marguerite. That will please her, I am sure, for don't you know how fond of them the Mountain House ladies are?"

"No, sir-ee. I am not going to spoil my Sunday trousers for anybody. Get up, Pedler, before Nan thinks of something else," Jack said, and hitting Pedler a smart blow with the whip, he started off at a rate of speed which greatly astonished Nannie. who did not know that for a week past the boy had secretly been trying Pedler's capabilities, or, as he called it, "putting him through his paces" with direct reference to this occasion.

Jack was very fond of horses, and would have liked nothing better than to have owned a racer

but as that was impossible he had to content himself with old Pedler, whose head was checked very high, and who, under the combined effects of oats and hay and the whip, sped down the road with a rush and a clatter, leaving a long trail of dust behind. At the top of the hill Jack stood up, and looking back saw Nannie still watching him, and made a feint of taking off his coat, but removed his hat instead, and swinging it around his head as a parting salute, disappeared in a turn of the road.

"Nan's a brick," he said, "and if Margret's half as nice, she'll do. But she won't be. A city swell, who most likely is afraid of a cow, and will screech if she sees a hornbug, or a worm."

He had reached the pond by this time and saw close to the shore, under the shadow of the great willow tree whose branches nearly touched the water, a bed of lilies, with their white petals partly opened to the sunshine.

"I s'pose I'd better do it, if it will please Nan; I don't care for t'other one," he said, and hitching Pedler to the fence, and taking off his shoes and stockings and rolling up his trousers' legs as far as possible, he soon had in his hands a large bunch of lilies, which he put carefully under the seat of the Pie Wagon until he should decide what disposition to make of them. "If she pans out well, I shall give them to her, and if she's a stuck up, I shan't," he said, as he again started on his way, and was soon at the little station just outside the village of Rocky Point.

It was nearly car time, and fastening Pedler to a post behind the building, and putting on his stock-

ings and shoes, which he had left off in order to dry his feet after his wade in the pond, he took his stand at the further end of the platform, and waited more nervously than he would like to have confessed, for the train, which soon came puffing across the meadow, and stopped before the station.

CHAPTER XXI.

MARGUERITE AND JACK.

If Marguerite could have known of all the love awaiting her, and all the forethought and care which had been expended on her account, her heart would not have been as heavy as it was when Rocky Point was called, and with her bag and umbrella, and book, and bouquet of flowers, and shawl, she stepped out of the car, and looked around her with a sense of bewilderment and uncertainty as to what she was to do next. She had expected her father to meet her, and had tried to fancy what he would be like, and what she should say to him and he to her. But he was not there, and she was conscious of a terrible sense of loneliness and homesickness stealing over her, when she saw a boy coming slowly towards her.

Jack had seen the tall young lady in the black tailor made dress and closely fitting jersey, as she left the train, and was sure it was his sister, wondering why, for so short a distance as New York was

from Rocky Point, she should have taken a parlor car. Brought up as he had been to count every penny, parlor cars seemed to him a waste of money, especially as she now had none to waste, and, confirmed in his opinion that she was proud and stuck up, he purposely waited a moment before starting to meet her, with his hands in his pockets and his hat pushed back from his forehead. Jack was a handsome boy, with something in his face and eyes which reminded Marguerite of herself, and she felt instinctively that it was her brother, and watched him curiously as he came up to her.

"Be you *Margret?*" he asked, and although she winced at his bad grammar, and the way he pronounced her name, she answered at once, "Yes, I am Marguerite, and you must be my brother Jack."

As she said this she electrified him with a smile so bright and dazzling that, as he afterwards told Nannie, he felt as if he had been struck with lightning, and if she had tried to kiss him then he should have let her! But she only gave him her hand, and continued: "I have never seen you before, as it is fifteen years since I was here. How old are you, Jack?"

He told her he was fourteen, and then, without offering to relieve her of her bag, or her shawl, or umbrella, or book, he led the way to the Pie Wagon, into which she was trying to climb, when she remembered her baggage, and exclaimed, "Oh, Jack,—my trunks. Is there an expressman here to whom I can give my checks?"

"Why, yes," Jack said. "There's Goss, who takes 'em for the city folks, but he'll charge you fifty

cents, and maybe more, because it's out of town. Leave 'em, and father or I will come for 'em with the cart."

Marguerite had not learned the value of fifty cents as Jack had, and hesitated a little, but finally concluded to leave them, and tried again to get into the Pie Wagon,—a feat not quite easy to accomplish by a woman. But she was in at last, and they started up the hill to the village, where Jack had some errands to do. Two pounds of loaf sugar, and half a pound of tea to buy in one place—some fly paper in another, and a spool of cotton in another, and Marguerite felt the color deepening on her cheeks as she met the admiring glances of the passers-by, all of whom, knowing the Rathburn turnout and that she was expected, readily guessed who she was, and half stopped to look at her.

"Yes, sir. That's my sister Margret from New York," Jack said more than once, with considerable pride in the beautiful girl who was attracting so much attention. "Now, go on," he said, gathering up the reins, and beginning to put old Pedler through his paces as they drove rapidly through the town into the country.

"Is it far? I do not quite remember," Marguerite asked, bending forward until Jack felt her breath stir his hair, and turning met her bright brown eyes, which affected him much as her smile had done.

"She is a stunner and no mistake, and not very stuck up," he thought, and deciding that she was worthy of the lilies, he stooped down to get them, when she turned the scale by saying, "Oh, Jack,

please, what is that lovely vine running along on the fence? Is it some kind of ivy?"

"That? Sho! Don't you know Bitter Sweet from ivy," Jack answered scornfully, straightening himself up and feeling sure that here at last were city airs.

A girl who didn't know Bitter Sweet from Ivy was not panning out well, and the chances were that Nannie, rather than Marguerite, would get the lilies, notwithstanding the latter's apology that she had never lived in the country since she left Rocky Point.

"But I like it so much. Everything is so fresh and green and peaceful," she continued, with her hand on the back of the seat where Jack was sitting, and her face very near his as she tried to talk to him and keep back the tears which were constantly threatening to come to the surface, as she remembered the past, and shrank more and more from what was in the future.

Mrs. James Rathburn, although civil and kind to every one with whom she was obliged to come in contact, had always evinced a strong antipathy to what she called the common people, and this feeling had been intensified by her long residence abroad, where she was often made to blush for some one of her countrymen, whom she designated as ignorant and second class. Naturally she had instilled her ideas into the mind of her daughter, who once, when reproved for having neglected to answer Nannie's letter, asked if her Uncle John's family were not ignorant and second class?

"Not ignorant, certainly," Mrs. Rathburn had

nswered quickly, "nor second class either, although hey are poor. The Rathburns cannot be second lass, and even if they are they are your own flesh nd blood, and must be respected accordingly."

Marguerite had thought but little of this remark t the time, but it recurred to her now with a new ieaning, and she understood why it had so often een impressed upon her that she must respect the mily at Rocky Point, although they were poor nd outside the pale of society. They were hers, nd this boy, with *country* stamped upon him from ie cut of his clothes to the tone of his voice, and is occasional lapses into bad grammar and slang as her brother, and perhaps only a sample of what as to come when she met the others. Marguerite eant to do right, but she was young, and at one ow had lost all that she held dearest, her mother, r money, her identity and her lover, and the ture looked very dark to her as she leaned back the Pie Wagon, and, shutting her eyes tightly, ied to keep back the tears which came in spite of r efforts, and rolled down her cheeks.

Meanwhile Jack, mindful that Nannie had told m he must be sociable, was trying to think of mething to say, and remembering that Marguer- had been to Egypt, the country of all others he d wished to see, suddenly burst out with, "How d you like old *Chops*, and did you go up him and o him?"

For a moment Marguerite did not think what he ant; then it flashed upon her, and conscious of a w feeling of interest in a boy who knew some- ing about Egypt she bent forward close to him

again and said, "You mean Cheops, the great Pyramid. Yes, I went up him with three Arabs to help me, and went into him, which was harder than going up, and sat on the back of the Sphynx, and saw the mummied Pharaoh, who must have played with Moses,—Rameses II. you know; and you have read about them. I'm so glad."

Her voice indicated surprise that one of Jack's class should have heard of these things, but Jack was trying to dislodge a big fly from Pedler's back, and did not notice it.

"There, darn you," he said, as he killed the fly. Then, turning to Marguerite, he continued: "Yes, I've read about the old chap in a book Dr. Catheron lent to Nan, and I'd rather go to Egypt than any place in the world, and I mean to go sometime, too, and stand on the top of what d'ye call him, if I ever get money enough. But it will be a good while first, I guess, for we are pretty poor, andwe have to work hard for what we eat and wear; that is, father and Nan and I do. Mother don't, she's weakly, you know, and lies abed all the time; bed-rid, folks say, and she is always having every new disease there is going, but somehow don't have 'em really, you know. Just imagines it, which is almost as bad."

At this mention of his father and mother and Nannie, Marguerite experienced a sharp pang of remorse that she had not thought to inquire for them, and hastened to make amends by saying, "Is your—is mother so bad as that? and do you all work so hard?"

"Wall, I guess we do," Jack answered. "But father and me don't mind it. We are used to it, but

's mighty tough on Nan, who is a little thing, with weak back, to do all the housework and take care f mother, too."

"Nannie do all the work!" Marguerite repeated surprise. "Why, Jack, what do you mean? Don't ou keep a servant?"

"We don't call 'em servants here," Jack said, a tle stiffly, and then continued: "No, we don't ep help, except old Sally Marsh, who washes ondays and sometimes irons when Nan has a head- he."

"But who cooks the breakfast and lunch and nner, and washes all the dishes?" Marguerite ked, and Jack replied, "Why, Nan, of course, oks, and washes dishes, and scrubs, and skims the ilk, and works the butter, and takes care of mother, d everything. Nan is a trump, and the nicest girl all the world. Prays a good deal, I guess, and is rfully pious. Will not read a newspaper Sunday, r a novel; never complains a bit, though she does metimes gives me Hail Columby for my slang and nners, but she does it in such a way that I can't t mad. You don't know how she has worked to t ready for you, nor how fine she has fixed up ur room with ribbons and calico and muslin. I l you it looks neat, with that thing in the corner ich Miss Grainger sent over, and which folds up e clothes bars. I hope you will like it all, for it ll break Nan's heart if you don't. I do believe e was up by four o'clock this morning, tearing nd to get things ship shape because you were ming. And such a lot of stuff as she's got baked on the buttery shelf. Do you like angel's food?"

Marguerite did not know any food by that n and innocently said that she did not, asking wh was.

"Why, it's a cake that takes the whites of el eggs, and has to be beat half an hour. I heard say so, and it made her shoulder ache dreadfu Jack replied, with a good deal of emphasis on eleven eggs, which, when eggs were thirty cer dozen meant so much money out of Nan's pocke the price of eggs was a part of her perquisites.

But this Marguerite did not know, and she me said she was sure she should like the angel's very much, and everything else which Na made.

"But I am sorry she has to work so hard," added, while Jack, who had it in his mind to be Nannie, continued; "So be I, and I hope s have it easier now you've come to help her. you cook, or wash dishes?"

Marguerite had never done either, and in until within the last few weeks had scarcely waited upon herself enough to hang up her dresses. But she could not confess this to garrulous boy, whose sharp eyes seemed to read inmost thoughts, and she answered him hesitatin "No–o. I don't believe I can cook much, or v dishes either, but I can learn very readily, and not want to add to Nannie's burdens, and, Jack she continued, putting her hand on his shoulder may forget, and not know that I am making e work, because everything will be so different, a I do, and you see that Nannie is more tired bec of me, will you tell me?"

"Yes, *sir!* I'll tell you if I think you are shirking," Jack replied, with a great accession of cheerfulness in the tone of his voice.

She was *panning out* pretty well, after all, and he might venture to give her the lilies. Bringing them out from under the seat, he handed them to her, saying, "I got 'em for you in the pond as I came by. Do you like 'em?"

"Oh, Jack, they are my favorite flowers. Thank you so much. It was kind in you to think of it," Marguerite exclaimed, as she buried her glowing face among the white petals, and then lifted it to Jack, with one of those bright smiles which showed her dimples, and made Jack's heart beat quickly.

"She is handsome as blazes," he thought, and then, as she removed her gloves, which were getting wet with the lily stems, he saw how soft, and white, and pretty her hands were, with the diamonds upon them, and thought such hands could scarcely do what Nan's did.

He was glad now that he had brought her the lilies, but was too much of a Rathburn to take any credit which did not belong to him, and hastened to say, "*I* didn't think of it. 'Twas Nan who thought you'd like them, because most city folks do. Nan thinks of everything."

"I am sure she does," Marguerite replied, and then she asked, "How does she look?"

Ten minutes ago, and Jack would have answered, "She is the prettiest girl I ever saw;" but with Marguerite's smile and eyes and dimples intoxicating him as they were, he did not quite know whether to give the preference to Nannie or not.

"She's a little slim thing," he finally began,—"a head shorter than you, I guess. And there's a small bunch on one shoulder, which scarcely shows at all, though when she gets her nerves upset she thinks it as big as a barn, and worries about it awfully; and she has the sweetest face, all pink and white, but no holes in her cheeks like you have when you laugh. She has great blue eyes, with a look in them that makes you do what she wants you to do, and long, yellowish hair, full of waves, that glistens in the sun, and wants to curl, if she would let it. But she sometimes takes a fit that it is wicked, and that if she does it her shoulder will grow faster, just as if God would spite a little girl like that. I don't believe in such a God, do you? I hope you'll get her off that notion, she looks so much better with it curled. She's awful tender hearted, and every animal on the place knows her voice, and will follow her when she calls. You ought to see her cat, black Tom, as big as a dog, weighs thirty pounds, and shines like glass. Nan found him four years ago, with a tin pan hitched to him and some boys pelting him with stones to make him run. When Nan's blood is up, it's up, and she knocked one feller down, and hit another in the face, and took the cat home, and has kept him ever since. If you want Nan to like *you* you must like Tom! She's great on cats. By George, there's Dr. Catheron," he exclaimed, as, at a turn in the road, he saw the doctor coming towards him in his phaeton, with the big, black horse he so much admired. "Hallo, Doctor," he called familiarly, while, "Good afternoon, Jack," came pleasantly back, as the doctor

lifted his hat and bowed to Marguerite, who thought, "what a fine looking man," while Harry Bellamy came into her mind by way of contrast.

Harry was younger, and handsomer, perhaps, and more fashionable in his dress, but still lacking something which the doctor possessed, and the latter gained by the comparison.

"That's Dr. Catheron," Jack said, in a tone of pride; "and that's his big, black horse, Nero, that he give over five hundred dollars for, though he's worth a thousand, they say. My, 'aint he a beauty?" and the boy looked admiringly after the high stepping Nero, which Dr. Catheron had bought a few weeks before of a horse dealer, who had failed, and was obliged to sell at a sacrifice. "He lives up at the Pines, the handsomest place in the county," Jack continued, "and the house is full of pictures, and books, and things, and marble men and women bought in Europe. Nan goes there often, for she and Miss Grainger are great cronies."

"Who is Miss Grainger?" Marguerite asked, and Jack replied, "She's his step-sister, and he's paying attention to her, they say."

"He's what?" Marguerite said, and Jack explained, "Why, he's her beau, and will marry her if she ever gets well; but I guess she won't, for she's got the consumption. She's very nice, and thinks a sight of Nan, and sent down a cart load of flowers this morning, and that thing for your room that shuts up like clothes bars. You are sure to like her, and the doctor, too. He's splendid. He needn't doctor if he didn't want to, for he has lots of money, but he likes it, and says he can do more good that way

than any other, and that he likes the country best. He comes to see mother a sight, but he only charges half price to poor people like us."

Marguerite shivered a little at this, for she knew that she now belonged to the poor people, and she felt her heart swelling in her throat, while Jack went on:

"I know you will be pleased with the Pines and the folks there, for they are more like you than we are. Still, I think you'll get used to us by-and-by, and like us, too, and we shall like you. I like you some now, while Nan,—well, she just worships—"

He didn't get any further, for, with something which sounded like a sob, Marguerite exclaimed, "Oh, Jack, thank you for that. Try and like me a great deal; there is scarcely any one left to care for, or love me now, and I am so desolate."

She put her head down upon the seat where Jack was sitting, and he knew that she was crying, while he, too, worked hard to keep back his own tears, for in a way he comprehended her position, and felt sorry for her. She was a pretty nice girl, and he should stand by her, he thought; and then, with a feeling that he ought to do something to comfort her, he said, very softly and low, "Don't cry, Margie, it will make your eyes red, and Nan will know it and feel bad. Cheer up, do; we are almost at the top of the hill where we can see the house."

Either the sound of the pet name, Margie, or something in Jack's voice, made Marguerite cry harder than ever for a moment, and then, with a great effort she dried her tears, and lifted her head just as they came to the top of the hill, from which

she looked down into the valley below, with its meadows and fields and orchards, a part of their farm, Jack told her. And there on a little knoll was the house, shaded by a tall maple tree, and looking very cool and quiet in the distance.

"There's Nan in the doorway watching for us, and Tom is there with her, whacking his tail. Get up, Pedler. You've lazied long enough," Jack said, with a cut of the whip which sent old Pedler galloping down the hill and up to the front gate, through which Nannie came with a smile on her lips, and followed by Tom, who, with feline sagacity, recognized a friend in the new-comer, and at once began to roll over, his usual way of expressing his satisfaction.

Jack sprang to the ground, but did not offer to help Marguerite out. He merely said, as he saw her look of perplexity, "I told you it was worse to get out of than into. You'll have to *cork-screw*."

What he meant by that Marguerite did not in the least know, but Nannie came to her rescue, and explained, "Put your foot on the first step,—so—now, turn round, and put your other foot on the next step,—so—; there, that's right."

With some little difficulty the *cork-screw* was accomplished, and then Marguerite stood face to face with Nannie.

CHAPTER XXII.

MARGUERITE AT HOME.

The two presented a striking contrast as they confronted each other, Marguerite tall and queenly, with dark brown eyes and hair, and something in every movement which bespoke the city girl and the training she had had; Nannie, short of stature, and fragile as a lily, with a delicate, flower-like face, golden hair and great blue eyes, in which there was a shade of disappointment, as they looked curiously at Marguerite, and failed for a moment to see the wonderful beauty they had expected to find. For Marguerite was very pale and tired, and around her mouth there was a hard, set expression, such as it wore when she was under strong excitement and agitation, and trying to restrain her feelings. But when she met Nannie's eyes, so full of love and tender solicitude, the hardness passed away, her brilliant color came back to her face, while the smile which had so bewildered Jack, danced in her eyes, and brought the dimples in her cheeks into full play, as, laying her hands on Nannie's shoulders, she said, "And you are my sister Nannie. What a dear little creature you are," and, stooping down, she kissed the lips, raised so eagerly to meet her own.

"Now mind that you brace up, and not go to slopping over when you see Margret," Jack had said to Nannie two or three times that morning, and Nan

le had intended to heed his advice and not slop ver, as he termed her crying.

But at the sound of Marguerite's voice calling her ister, and the touch of Marguerite's lips, she forgot verything but her own intense happiness, and lay- ıg her head on Marguerite's shoulder, sobbed like child.

"There she goes; I knew she would," Jack ıought, as he stood at a little distance watching ɛr, and then, with a derisive whistle, he took old edler and the Pie Wagon to the barn, wondering hat made girls so queer.

Nannie heard the whistle and understood it, and ting up her head, said apologetically, "Jack told e not to cry and make a baby of myself, and I dn't mean to, but I am so glad you have come, ıd when you called me sister, just as if you loved e, it brought to me all I have lost the years you ıve been away, and I believe I was homesick for a oment, knowing what I had missed. You are glad be here, ar'n't you?"

If Nannie had had a little more tact she would not soon have asked a question so hard for Marguer- ɛ to answer. She was not glad to be there, and hile resolving to make the best of what she could ɔt help, she was mentally rebelling against every- ing, except Jack and Nannie, and wondering how e could bear it. She was very pale again, and the ɛrn, proud look had settled around her mouth, but annie did not see it. She only knew that Marguer- ɛ kissed her a second time and said, "Everything new to me yet, and makes me feel strange and zzy, but I am glad you are my sister."

Nannie was now gathering up the things which, with a boy's thoughtlessness, Jack had left upon the ground,—the bag, and umbrella, and book, and flowers, and shawl, all of which she carried in her arms as she led the way into the house, followed by her sister, who was fighting too fierce a battle with herself to notice the fresh green grass, over which Jack had run the lawn mower that morning, or the pretty flowers in the border, and the roses and honeysuckle trained on the trellis, and the woodbine climbing over the front porch, in which was a bit of carpet and a chair or two, suggestive of rest and pleasant talk in the afternoon when the work was done and the sun was in the west. There was a lump in her throat, a tightness about her heart, and a mist before her eyes, as she entered the house which was henceforth to be her home, and her only thought was, "I must not give way. I will not. But oh, if I could scream just once with all my might, I should feel better."

But she could not do this, and she tried to listen to what Nannie was saying to her as she ushered her into the parlor, which was not half as pleasant as the sitting-room across the narrow hall. But it was the best room, the one kept for company, and Marguerite sat down upon the stiff hair-cloth sofa, and looked so white that Nannie was alarmed and asked what she could do for her.

"Nothing, nothing. I am only tired. I was up late last night, and my head aches a little; it will soon pass off," Marguerite said, leaning back and shutting her eyes tight to keep the tears from falling.

She was feeling really very tired and faint, and let Nannie take off her hat and gloves, and put some camphor on her head, which was whirling like a top with more excitement than pain, and in her morbid state of mind fancied that the camphor had a second class smell, as if made of whiskey instead of alcohol, but accepted it as a part of her new life, which she was going to bear so bravely.

"Thanks. I am better now," she said, with a smile which showed both her dimples and her fine teeth, and made her eyes so bright that Nannie felt for a moment as if two or three pairs were looking at her instead of one.

"Will you go and see mother now?" she asked, and instantly the sparkle left the eyes, which saw only the grave in Greenwood, where the mother she had thought hers was buried.

But the ordeal must be passed, and rising mechanically, she followed Nannie through the hall and dining-room, and on into the sick room, where Agnes lay, pale and worn, with long confinement indoors instead of disease, but still rather pretty, with her hair falling about her as she had arranged it with the aid of her hand-glass, when she heard from Nannie that the Pie Wagon was in sight. She had also rubbed her cheeks to bring some color to them and forced into her eyes what she thought a becoming expression, and so lay waiting for her daughter. At first Marguerite could see nothing clearly, and was only conscious that there was some one on the bed. Then forcing down her weakness and rallying all her strength, she advanced resolutely to the embrace

of the arms which held her so tightly for a moment that she could scarcely breathe.

"My precious child, my first-born, whom I have pined for all these weary years; welcome home again," was what Agnes had meant to say, and had rehearsed many times. But at the sight of the tall, beautiful girl coming towards her, with something in the eyes which brought back to her the little Margie, who went away from her long ago, all her foolishness was swept away, and for a moment the mother and the true woman asserted itself, and all she said as she folded Marguerite to her bosom, was, "My dear child. Thank God, I see you again."

There was no acting here, and Nannie, who had dreaded an outburst of poetry, or of what Jack called his mother's gush, was glad, and went out of the room, leaving the two alone. Releasing her daughter at last, Mrs. Rathburn asked her to stand off from the bed where she could look at her and see what she was like.

"You are very beautiful," she said, regarding her with pride, "and I hope you will be happy with us, although we are so different from the people with whom you have been associated. Your aunt Amy has done well by you, as she promised she would."

At the mention of that name Marguerite's lip quivered, and she would have cried outright, if Nannie had not come to the rescue and asked if she would like to see her room. Marguerite could not tell her mother that she was happy, and glad to be there, but she kissed her, and laying her hand on her forehead said to her, "It is so different, of course, but I shall try hard to—to—not be homesick, and

ou must be very patient with me, for I am not at ll like Nannie. I wish I were."

Agnes thought her greatly superior to Nannie, as ıe watched her leaving the room, and saw how oudly she carried herself, and how graceful she as in every movement, and how much taller than e little girl who led the way up the stairs to the or of the front chamber, where she stopped and pped back in order to let her sister take in the ıole effect. Marguerite would scarcely have been rtal if she had not been pleased with the room, full of flowers and pretty devices for her comfort. 'Oh, Nannie," she exclaimed, her face lighting with genuine delight. "How pretty and quaint s and how you must have worked to get it done and at a funny calico bureau. Jack told me about it." Here she stopped and choked a moment; then tting a hand on each of Nannie's shoulders, as she l done when they first met, and looking into her er's face, she went on: "I don't deserve all this dness. I am not a bit like you, and I feel so—so ınge, you know; but, I am going to do my very t, and if I fail at first you must not mind it. I so glad you are here."

f she had said any more she would have broken vn, so she stopped suddenly, and began to smell flowers, and look at the screen, and examine the eau and bedstead, which struck her as so odd, but tty. And while she was doing this, Nannie was ıiring her, and the fit of her dress, and the style in ch she wore her hair, and the slightly foreign ent in her voice, and wondering how she could for oment have been disappointed and thought her

anything but beautiful, while, mingled with the admiration was a certain awe of her as something vastly superior to any one she had ever seen. Alice Grainger was refined and city bred and fashionable, but not at all like Marguerite, with her stately beauty and her air of "La Grande Duchesse," so natural to her. In fact, Nannie was a little afraid of her, or would have been but for the bright smiles which Marguerite flashed upon her so often, and the frequent touch of the hands, which sometimes clutched her arm or shoulder so tightly as to give her positive pain. It seemed as if the city girl were holding fast to the country lass for strength with which to fight the battle she was fighting mentally, notwithstanding all her smiles and sweetness. Suddenly there was the sound of a heavy footstep, and a man's voice below, and Nannie started, exclaiming, "That's father. I am so glad he has come. I wondered where he was. We will go down and see him."

Alas for Marguerite. In her excitement she had scarcely given her father a thought, and it came to her with a fresh shock that here was another one whose acquaintance she must make, and to whom she owed loyalty. But she at once followed Nannie down the stairs to the sitting-room where her father was waiting for her. John Rathburn had risen very early and had seemed unusually preoccupied, as he busied himself with his work. He had eaten little for breakfast and less for dinner, and after it was over had lingered around the house until nearly train time, when he started to go out. But Nannie's "Father, you are going to change your clothes?"

ght him back and sent him to his room, from
h he emerged in fresh linen and his Sunday
looking quite the gentleman, Nannie thought,
e watched him going across the orchard to the
›sure where old Brindle lay under an apple tree,
asleep in the summer sunshine, but looking up
mily when his master approached, as if expect-
omething to eat. But John only stroked his fat
and pulling up a wisp of grass, gave it to him,
ıg, "Margie is coming home to-day, old feller.
eighteen years since she went away. What do
think she will be like, and will she care for us?
much, I guess;" and he laughed as he sat down
a stone and fanned himself with his hat just as he
loing when we first saw him in the hay-field. He
: had remembered that this was the anniversary
argie's going away; that eighteen years ago on
y day much like this, he had watched a white
ıonnet until it disappeared from sight, and had
hat nearly all the brightness of his life had gone
the little girl for whom he had prayed every
ıing and every night, asking that she might be
from harm and grow into a true christian
an, who, if she never again called him father in
world, would know and claim him as such in
ıext. And now she was coming back, and he
ot know whether he were glad or not. What
d she be like, and what would she think of them
her mother, with her fancies and hypo,—of
a country boy, full of slang and contempt for
ıing like style,—and of himself, her father, a
ı man, with horny hands and shoulders bent
toil. For Nannie he had no apprehension.

"Everybody likes Nan," he said, "and if Marguerite don't—if she makes her unhappy, or tries to queen it over her, by jing, I'll——"

He did not finish the sentence, but brought his fist down upon his knee so forcibly that Brindle started and looked inquiringly at him, and then resumed his drowsy attitude, while in the distance Mr. Rathburn heard the whistle of the train as it drew up to the station, and again as it rolled away.

"I s'pose I ought to be in the house when she comes, but I snum if I can do it. I'd rather wait till Nan and Agnes have had their turn at her, and she's kind of used to us," he said.

And so he kept his seat, and waited and listened until he heard the roll of wheels and the clatter of Pedler's feet as he dashed up to the gate.

"He's putting the old hoss through lively. I wonder what she thinks of the rig generally," he thought, laughing a little at the idea of Pedler and the Pie Wagon bringing Marguerite home. "The doctor's Nero and Victory would suit her better," he said, conscious of a feeling of gladness that there was a Dr. Catheron, who must be much like the people to whom Marguerite was accustomed, and who was sure to please her.

He could hear voices now, Jack's saying something about a cork-screw, and Nannie's,—and,—yes, there was a third, softer, sweeter, different from the others, with a note in it which reminded him of an English lady he had seen at the Mountain House. It was Marguerite's voice, he knew and the sound of it seemed to separate her further from him than

, and made him wonder again what she would
t of him and the home to which she had come.
e saw Nannie when she came to the well for
r, and drawing back into an angle of the wall,
himself from view until Jack, who had unhar-
d Pedler and turned him into the lane, came
ling that way, and passed him.
Hallo," the boy said, " you here? Why ain't you
house? Margret's come."
es, I know," his father replied, coloring as if
it in some act of which he was ashamed. " I
, but I thought I'd wait till Nan and your
r had it out with her. I s'pose they'll both go
onniptions. What is she like?"
k, who was very quick-witted, understood the
e of his father's feelings at once, and hastened
ssure him.
oo," he said, with a toss of his head, "you
't be afraid. She ain't stuck up at all. She's
ate, and she wants us to like her, and when I
er we should, and that I did like her some, she
right out, kind of glad and pitiful like, too,
now, and said, 'Oh, Jack, try to like me a
deal. I am so lonesome,' or something like
And I'm going to stand by her, through
nd thin; but if I'se you, I'd go in now and see
d kiss her, if she plays up to you any, because
e her father. I didn't, but I'm only a boy
r brother. You hain't any tobacco in your
, have you?"
Rathburn, whose one weakness was a rather
e of the weed, acknowledged that he guessed
a little speck, but added that he'd rinse his

mouth at the well as he went along. Then, nerving himself for the effort, and a good deal encouraged by what Jack had said, he finally started for the house, lingering a long time by the well, where he gave his mouth several baths, thinking, however, that it was labor wasted, as it was very doubtful whether he kissed Marguerite or not.

"Oh, John, she's exquisitely beautiful, and so genteel and stylish. I do hope you will be careful and don't say, 'Be you pretty well?' I so want you to make a good impression," was his wife's greeting, when he at last entered the house and looked into her room.

And somehow the injunction seemed to freeze him at once into a great mass of shy awkwardness, and, with his hands in his pockets and his hat on his head, he stood waiting for the "beautiful and genteel" girl whom he heard coming down the stairs, and whom, when he first saw her, he would no sooner have kissed than he would have kissed the Queen of Sheba, had she been there in her royal robes, she was so grand looking, he thought, as she came towards him with her head held high and her shoulders thrown back. But when she offered him her hand and called him father, while the smile which made her so attractive came into her eyes, he forgot the Queen of Sheba, and remembering only the little child he had mourned so long, said to her, "God bless you, Margie. You are welcome home again. You were my little girl when you went away. You are my big one now, and I am glad to see you."

No greeting which Marguerite had received had

ted her like this, and as she looked into the sun-browned face, which was quivering with ressed emotion, she felt within her the awaken- f an affection such as she had never felt for the man, who she had supposed was her father, there swept over her wave after wave of thing in the past connected with this man lim to be perfectly remembered, and too clear wholly forgotten. Vague memories of green and pasture lands, of the sun in the West, the of a cow-bell, the tossing of white horns, a n his shirt sleeves in the distance, and herself a f it all, and in the picture somewhere. And she was struggling with these thoughts her was seeing again a little toddling girl, with ed face and tangled hair and soiled frock, in the back, coming down the lane to meet hen at night his work was done and he was g home the cows, old Lineback and Brownie, horns were sometimes lowered towards the when she happened to wear a red dress, and was a young calf bleating in the yard. And this little girl that he kissed, rather than the ul young lady who called him father and d his sunburned hands to her lips as she did arguerite's heart was lighter after this meet- ith her father, whom she watched curiously, with a pang how tired and worn and old he l, and reading in these tokens the story of his toil.

, if I only had some of the money we squan- so foolishly in Europe," she thought, more ice, as she sat talking with him in her mother's

room, while Nannie laid the tea table for which so much pains had been taken, and which looked very inviting, with its flowers and spotless linen, its delicious bread and butter, and berries and cream and custard pie, and angel's food, which Jack had said took the whites of eleven eggs, and to which Marguerite did ample justice, as she did to all Nannie's cookery.

For, although she could never remember having sat down to a table just like this, with no one to serve, and where the hostess got up once or twice, and the host ate his pie with his knife, and Jack did the same when Nannie was not looking at him, she was too hungry with her long fast from breakfast to notice or to care, if she had, and the only impression left upon her mind of that first meal at home was a pleasant one. But the pain of strangeness and homesickness and longing for a past which she knew could never be hers again, lay heavy in her heart, and she was glad when the day and short evening were ended, and she could go to her own room and be alone with herself as she knew herself,—not the smiling, gracious girl, acting a part for the sake of those around her, but the desolate, heart-broken creature, who felt, as she leaned from her window and looked out upon the moon just rising over the woods to the east, that if she could only scream, the pressure would give way, and the heat in her head abate.

Nannie had come with her to her room, arranging the bed for the night and laying out upon it the dainty night-dress, with its ruffles and tucks and lace, at which she looked admiringly, wondering a

how she should ever manage to iron anything laborate, even if it passed safely through old 's strong but careless hands. But if the night- was a marvel of prettiness, how was she ished when, laying aside her black dress, uerite took from her trunk an exquisite dress- own of some soft, creamy material, with wat- of lace from the throat to the hem, and flowing s, which were lined with satin and showed her l arms to perfection. At sight of her sister attired, Nannie drew a long breath of surprise lelight, for of such elegance in a bed-chamber ad never dreamed, and when Marguerite let her heavy hair, which fell to her waist, she med, "Oh, Marguerite, how grand and beauti- u are, but do you always brush your hair in a dress? Why, it is fit for a ball, and how nd ugly we must seem by comparison."

it very sweet and good," Marguerite replied, stooped to kiss the upturned face so full of r and admiration. "Now, good-night," she ued, adding as Nannie asked if there was any she could do, "Nothing now, but if you will ind in the morning as to bring me a pitcher water, I shall be glad."

nie said she would do so, wondering, however, one could want of hot water in the morning, here was plenty of cold in the pitcher. Then nt out, and Marguerite was at last alone. , how alone she felt, as, drawing a chair to ndow, she watched the moonlight creeping the fields and the road and the yard, until t looked into her room, where it lay in a great

silvery sheet upon the floor. How often c
such a night as this had she been with Harry
Grand Canal in Venice, or with her dead r
seen from their dahabeyah the moon rising
the sands of the desert and shining upon the
of the Nile, and the palm trees growing up
banks, with no care for the morrow, and no th
that the happy life of luxury she was leading
not go on forever. And now it was ended.
mother was dead. Her money was gone.
and Venice were thousands of miles awa
Harry was as surely lost to her as if deat
divided them, for although he might have lov
for herself rather than for her fortune or po
he was not strong enough to withstand his m
and even if he were she could never take hin
ing sure, as she did, that he would despise he
ily. There was no affinity between them, an
could have beaten herself for the blush she
was staining her cheeks as she thought of th
bred Harry, with his fastidious ideas, coming i
tact with the plain country people to who
belonged.

"But they are mine," she thought. "N
can change that, and I am going to love the
do right, but it does hurt so now. Oh, mamm
cried, stretching out her hands as to some
near her, "you told me to be brave, and ma
best of it, and I mean to. But why did you n
me the truth before my habits and tastes
formed, and I was familiar with a life so di
from this which I must take up. You wo
ashamed of me if you knew how weak and

ım, and how rebellious, too, when they are so
d, and have done so much to make it pleasant
me. She kissed me many times, and he kissed
on my forehead, and looked and seemed so glad
:n I called him father, and Jack told me that he
d me some, and Nannie—oh, I should die if it
e not for Nannie."

ı the abandonment of her grief Marguerite had
e down upon her knees by her chair, and with
face in her hands was trying to pray, although
words came, and her low sobs were the only
ıds which broke the stillness of her room.
rything about the house was quiet, and the only
g she heard outside was the clamoring of a
p of insects protesting loudly that "*Katy did,*"
e from a neighboring clump of trees a rival clan
ared vigorously that "*Katy didn't.*" Marguer-
vas not often nervous, but in her present state of
tement, the long contested battle, which has
:on for so many years, grated harshly upon her,
putting her hands to her ears to shut out the
ıor, she did not hear the door of her room open
iously, or the sound of feet upon the floor com-
to her side.

ınnie, who had fallen asleep almost as soon as
head touched her pillow, was dreaming that
: one in distress was calling her, when she awoke
a start and listened intently a moment. Then,
cing it might be her mother, she stepped out of
and was going out into the hall, when, as she
:d the door of her sister's room, her attention
arrested by the sound of sobbing, and she caught
v words of what Marguerite was saying. She

did not mean to listen, or think that she was listening, as in her surprise and distress she stood so still that she heard the whole from the part beginning with, "You would be ashamed of me if you knew how weak and wicked I am, and how rebellious, too."

Poor Nannie. She had worked so hard and prayed so often that Marguerite might be pleased and happy with them, and her faith that she would be had been so strong. And now, everything seemed to have failed her. Marguerite,—God, everything,—and for a moment she grew dizzy and faint, while her lips moved involuntarily with the prayer, "Please tell me what to do next."

Then, as she heard another sob, louder than any which had preceded it, she opened the door, and looking in, saw Marguerite kneeling in the moonlight, with her creamy dress trailing the floor and her lovely hair falling down her back in rich brown tresses. Without stopping to think whether she were intruding or not, Nannie went to her and kneeling down beside her, laid her arm caressingly across her neck, and said in the tones with which a fond mother would seek to soothe a weeping child, "Dear Margie, I was awake, I heard you cry and what you were saying, and I could not help coming to you. I am so sorry, and I have tried to do everything I could think of. Indeed, I have, but I don't know how. None of us know how. Will you teach us? Will you tell us, and are we so very different from anything you have ever seen, and is it so very dreadful to live here with us?"

Nannie intended no reproof in what she said.

er heart was very sore with disappointment for r failure, and in its soreness spoke out what it felt; d then with her face by Marguerite's, she, too, bbed as if her heart would break. It was Mar- erite's turn now to comfort and console, and she se to the emergency, and drying her own tears ok Nannie in her arms, and kissing her lovingly gan: "Forgive me, Nannie. I did not mean you to ow, and did not think you would hear me in my weak- ss, in which I was only going to indulge just once, alone by myself, and then I meant to do better. hat can I say to make you believe that I am not heartless, ungrateful, proud creature I must seem you? I do appreciate all you have done for me, pretty room, the home to which I really have no im, the love and kindness of you all. But, can't u see why at first it must be strange to me? Try understand what it would be to you if you were d suddenly that the woman you had dearly loved your mother, who had been all the world to you, l of whom you could recall nothing but tender- s, was not your mother at all, and that the man u had been taught to reverence in his grave as ur father was not your father,—that your home s gone, with everything that made it bright, and h it the friends you had prized the most, and that ceforth you must live with and call father and ther people whom you could scarcely remember ing seen, and who, kind and good as they might were still so different from the mother you had ught was yours, wouldn't you be homesick at t, and long for the mamma lying in Greenwood, the old, happy life?"

"Ye—es," Nannie answered, with a long-drawn breath which was half a sob, and Marguerite continued, "Let me tell you a little of the old life and home. Shall I?"

"Ye—es," Nannie gasped again, and Marguerite went on very rapidly to speak of the Nashville home where her childhood was passed, and where she had never known a care; then of New York, and Paris, and Rome, in all three of which cities they had lived like princes, never denying themselves a pleasure or a luxury which money could buy, and fancying each to-morrow would be as fair or fairer than to-day.

"And I thought this would go on forever, with no change except that it might grow brighter," she added in conclusion, "until the crash came, and I was told everything at once. But, Nannie darling, I shall not give way again as I have to-night. I promise that, and very soon I shall learn to love my new home, whose atmosphere is, I know, far more healthful than the old, for where you are there must be purity and truth and sweetness; and now you must go, for I hear the clock striking twelve, and your eyes are very heavy. Good-night, and to-morrow you will see a different Marguerite from this one, of whom I am ashamed."

Marguerite's was the ruling spirit now, and kissing Nannie, she led her to the door of her room, which was again shut between them.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE NEXT DAY.

annie was too much excited to fall asleep easily, when she did it was to dream of the beautiful gs which had been described by Marguerite, which she was vainly trying to bring back to her, e her sister seemed drifting farther and farther y. Such sleep was not very refreshing, and n at last she heard her father moving in the ıen, she felt more tired than when she went to the previous night, and thought what a luxury ɔuld be to stay where she was a few hours, with :are for anything. But such self-indulgence not for her, and dressing herself, she went n-stairs, and opening the doors and windows, let e fresh morning air, which did her good and ght back the color to her cheeks, and the age to her heart.

t is perfectly natural that Marguerite should as she does. I should do the same in her :," she said, as she busied herself with the ɾfast, which she tried to make as tempting as ble. "I can't do as they did in Paris, and e, and New York, with so many servants and ything, but I'll give her the very best we , and wait upon her the very best I can;" ;o she laid the table with the snowdrop cloth the best stone china and silver forks, with :rs in the centre, just as she had done the night

before, and thought, as she looked out upon the trees and dewy grass, and inhaled the perfume of the roses and heliotrope and pinks, that the country was surely fairer and sweeter than the town, and that Marguerite must think so, too, after she was more accustomed to it.

She had not yet heard her moving, and when the strawberries were picked over, and the muffins were in the oven, she remembered suddenly the hot water her sister had asked for and took it up at once, full of regret and apologies for her forgetfulness. But Marguerite was sleeping so quietly, with a smile on her lips as if dreaming of something very pleasant, that Nannie would not disturb her.

"She is in her old home again; it would be a pity to wake her," she thought, and leaving the pitcher of water, she went noiselessly down the stairs, telling Jack, who came in from the barn with a pail of milk, "not to make any noise or he would waken Marguerite," and feeling a little relieved that her sister would not appear at the breakfast table, to which she knew her father and Jack would sit down without their coats, as the morning was very warm. "I'll fix the little round table near the window when she gets up," she thought, as she removed the snowdrop cloth and silver forks, and substituted in their place the ordinary wares of every day use, lamenting that the muffins, which came out so light and puffy, would be soggy and spoiled with waiting, and wondering if Marguerite would like griddle cakes in their place.

Every thought was for Marguerite and what would please her most, as the busy little housewife

went about her work, now in the pantry, now in the cellar, now in her mother's room, where the "welcome to my first born" was being finished, and now in the kitchen, driving out the flies and nearly flirting her apron in the face of Dr. Catheron, who stood in the door, a bunch of roses in one hand, and in the other the bridle of his big black Nero, who, he said, he dared not hitch by the gate lest he should tear it down and paw up all the turf.

"Alice sent you these with her love," he said, giving the roses to Nannie, and adding, "How is Miss Rathburn? I don't expect to see her so early, of course, but shall call with Mrs. Catheron this afternoon. I am out now to exercise Nero, who has quite too much life to allow of his being kept quiet long. What do you think of him?"

Nannie was nearly as fond of horses as Jack, and this wonderful Nero, of whom she had heard so much, filled her with admiration and sent her off into rhapsodies.

"Oh, he's a beauty, and exactly the kind of beast I'd like to ride, if I could, he is so tall and big," she said, stroking the horse, who, recognizing in her a friend, rubbed his head against her arm.

"And you shall ride him," the doctor said, lifting her upon his back before she could guess his intention. "Sit still," he continued, as she began to wriggle, and Nero to prance. "He is not accustomed to skirts, but he cannot throw you so long as I have hold of him. Be quiet, Nero."

He was leading the horse into the road, talking to

him the while, until Nero became quiet, and Nannie lost her fear of him.

"I know you are a pretty good horsewoman," the doctor said, "and can sit a man's saddle quite as well as a woman's, for I have seen you on old Pedler. Suppose you try Nero alone."

He let go the bridle and watched Nannie as, bare-headed, and in her high-necked gingham apron, she went galloping down the road as far as the gate to one of her father's fields. Then turning, she came back, her eyes sparkling and her cheeks glowing with the pleasure and excitement of having ridden Nero.

"You look ten per cent. better than you did," the doctor said, lifting her from the steed. "It was a very pale, tired face which met me at the door, but you are fresh now as a rose. I must bring Nero again and give you an airing."

As he talked, he put back from her forehead, as naturally as he might have done had he been her father, a curl of her hair, which had fallen over it, and then asked again the question he remembered she had not answered, "How is your sister this morning?"

"I don't know," Nannie replied. "She isn't up yet."

"Not up!" the doctor repeated in some surprise, as he involuntarily consulted his watch, which pointed to nine.

Nannie detected the disapproval in his voice, and hastened to explain that Marguerite was very tired the previous night, and was sleeping so soundly when she went up to call her that she did not like

to waken her. To this the doctor made no direct response, but said, "I believe I told you that I should call with Mrs. Catheron this afternoon or evening;" then, mounting Nero, who was pawing impatiently, he touched his hat and rode rapidly away, followed by the admiring eyes of both Nannie and Marguerite.

The latter was up, and from the window had seen Dr. Catheron leading Nero through the gate, with Nannie on his back, and then with some alarm for her sister's safety, had watched the gallop to the fields and back; had seen, too, the bright flush on Nannie's face, and how carefully the doctor took her down and brushed the hair from her forehead. And the sight made her uneasy. Could the man have it in his heart to trifle with Nannie? It almost seemed so, for it was scarcely possible that Dr. Catheron could care for a little country girl. And yet, why not, she asked herself. He could not find a purer nature, or prettier face, if he looked the world through. Then she remembered that Jack had said he was engaged to the Miss Grainger who had sent her the screen behind which she was taking a bath as well as she could in so confined quarters and with so limited conveniences. But perhaps Jack was mistaken, and if not, what possibilities might there not be in Nannie's future—Dr. Catheron and the Pines, while she would be left to live her desolate life alone.

"I've heard somewhere that every dog has his day, and I have had mine and ought to be willing for Nannie to have hers, but I believe the dog who has had his day and lost it, feels worse than the

one who never had it," she thought, as she hastened her toilet, with a feeling that she ought not to have slept so late. But Nannie told her it did not matter at all, and set her down to the little round table, on which her breakfast was laid, with the roses which Dr. Catheron had brought from the Pines in the centre.

"We had some muffins," she said, "but they are spoiled now, so I will make you some cream toast, and would you like an egg and some cold ham?"

Marguerite, whose appetite seldom failed her, said she liked everything, and enjoyed her breakfast immensely with Nannie to wait upon and talk to her of Dr. Catheron, telling of his call and the impromptu ride she had taken upon Nero's back.

"Yes, I saw you from the window," Marguerite replied, "and I saw the doctor, too. He is a very handsome man," and her eyes scrutinized Nannie's face closely, but read there no sign of what she had half suspected. Then she spoke of Miss Grainger, who had sent her the screen, and to whom Jack had said the doctor was engaged.

"Oh, yes," Nannie replied, "they are engaged. Alice told me so herself, and seems to love him very much. But she will never live to marry him. She is so weak that she does not even sit up."

"And does the doctor love her very much?" Marguerite asked, and Nannie, who had sometimes had her doubts upon that subject, answered hesitatingly, "I don't know. He is very kind to her, but I guess men are different from girls and never show all they feel; and then she is not at all like him. She is very queer at times. and I think some one else

would suit him better, though I ought not to say that. It seems disloyal to Alice."

Nannie, who remembered Alice's fierce jealousy of her sister, was getting confused, while Marguerite, seeing her confusion, drew her own conclusions and thought, "I was right after all. He does care, and she does know, and after Alice is gone it will come to pass, and Nannie will have a different life from this, and I am very glad for her."

She had finished her breakfast by this time, and then went to see her mother, who had completed her poem of welcome and was waiting to read it to her.

"I am going to send it to the *Springfield Republican*, which has already published one or two of my articles, and this I consider a great compliment," Mrs. Rathburn said, after she had read it, and then she spoke of Marguerite's dress, asking where she bought it and how much it cost, and said it had been one of the dreams of her life to have a gown from Paris.

"Your dream can easily be realized, for I have a trunk full of Paris gowns which will be out of style before I can wear them again," Marguerite replied, wondering how her mother would look in one of Worth's last efforts, which she had thought a little too extreme for herself. "Mamma told me not to wear mourning for her," she continued. "Crape, you know, but I must wear black, except in the morning, when I do not think white out of place, and I have so many pretty wrappers and tea gowns."

Marguerite's dress that morning was a combination of white cambric, lace and embroidery, exquis-

itely fashioned, as only French fingers can fash such an article, while the drapery was the perfec of art, and showed her fine figure to great ad tage. She had put one of Dr. Catheron's r where a knot of ribbon had been, and another at belt, and Mrs. Rathburn felt as she looked at that no mother had ever had so beautiful a daugh while Nannie thought her far too dainty ever stay in the sitting-room, and begged her to go the parlor and rest herself in the rocking-chair, w she prepared the dinner, which her father expe at twelve o'clock.

"Indeed I shall not sit in the parlor, and I d like to rock," Marguerite said, with a shudder as recalled the hair cloth sofa and chairs. "I am g to stay where you are and see you work. It se so strange to me that you can get dinner and everything, while I can do nothing."

And so Nannie brought into the kitchen a easy chair, which she put into the coolest place the door, where Marguerite sat down and wat her as she flitted from one thing to another li little humming bird, but never thinking that could in any way assist her. Nor would Na have allowed it had she offered. Marguer hands were too white and soft to come in cor with pots and kettles and dish water or cook Hers were used to it, the little brown hands w had ministered to the wants of so many, and wh brown as they were, were shapely and dimpled, just such hands as a man would like to hold call his own.

Nannie was getting very tired, and as the c

pointed to half-past eleven she began to wish she might serve the dinner in the kitchen, as that would save her many steps. But the kitchen days were over, for after what Marguerite had told her of her old life, with French maids and butlers and servants in livery, she must never eat there, and so the table was laid in the dining-room, and a china plate and silver fork and napkin given to Marguerite, to whom it did at last occur to ask if she could not do something.

"It seems so selfish for me to sit here doing nothing while you are so busy, although you move so easily and quickly that it does not look hard," she said, while Nannie replied, "There's nothing you can do unless you take the towel and shake it from the top of the wash bench outside the door to let the men folks know dinner is ready."

So Marguerite took the towel, and, mounting upon the wash bench, shook it in the direction of the field where her father and Jack were at work, and from which there came to her a loud whoop from Jack. He had been watching for the signal some time, and when he caught sight of it and the tall white-robed figure outlined against the green of the hop vines growing by the door, he said to his father, "I guess Margret's helpin' Nan, for she's shakin' the rag. Dinner's ready."

But Marguerite did not look much like helping Nan, when they saw her in the dining-room in her Paris wrapper, with the roses in the folds of lace and in her belt. Jack thought she might be dressed for a party, and felt shy and awkward as he bade her good-morning and took his seat at the table, try-

ing to remember what Nan had told him to do and not to do. But his keen appetite soon got the better of him, and his knife traveled to his mouth much oftener than his fork, which was frequently held straight up, while Nannie tried in vain to call his attention to it.

When dinner was over, Marguerite astonished and delighted her father and Jack by asking if she might go with them to the field and see them make hay.

"I have seen the peasants in the hay-fields in France and Germany, and always thought I'd like to do it myself. I believe I could make a capital farmer," she said, and bringing down her big straw hat, with a wreath of lilacs around it, and her red silk parasol and long gloves, she started with them down the lane, turning aside at her father's request to pay court to old Brindle, who was still lying in the shade, and who, he told her, had carried her on his back the day she visited them.

"Oh, I remember it, and you held me on, and kissed me when you took me down. I know now why you did it. You were my father and I never guessed it," Marguerite exclaimed, taking his hand in hers and looking up at him with eyes swimming in tears.

She had such pretty ways of expressing herself, and seemed so pleased with everything, that the heads of both her father and Jack were nearly turned by the time they reached the meadow where they were gathering the hay. There was a large stone under one of the trees, and there Marguerite sat down with her father's coat under her to keep

her dress clean, and while they worked she watched them and talked to them, and finally tried her hand at raking, and got into quite a glee with Jack, who, in a boy's outspoken fashion, criticised her style of holding the rake, and told her she was no good, but thought in his heart that she was the jolliest girl for a city girl he had ever seen.

And while Marguerite, who had a great love for out-door exercise, was sporting in the meadows, and winding herself closely around the hearts of her father and Jack, Nannie at the house was doing her after dinner work, and attending to Marguerite's room, which was just as the young lady had left it. Never in her life had Marguerite made her own bed, nor did it occur to her to make it now. And Nannie was glad of it, and did it herself cheerfully, feeling it no hardship, and when it was done sat down a moment to rest in the cushioned rocking-chair which was so comfortable that after her dress was changed she felt more inclined to stay in it than to go to the meadow as she intended doing.

"I wonder if Marguerite will care if I do not come. I am so tired, and the lane is so hot," she thought, when the matter was decided for her by the sound of wheels stopping at the gate.

It was the low open carriage from the Pines, driven by Dr. Catheron himself, who, with his step-mother, had come to call on Marguerite. In an instant Nannie forgot how tired she was, but her face showed it, and when, after explaining that her sister was in the field, she added that she would go for her, the doctor interposed, saying, 'You will do

nothing of the sort. You will stay here and entertain Mrs. Catheron, while I go for her myself."

"But," Nannie protested, "it is the farther field, near the woods,—a long way off, and the sun is so hot in the lane with no shade."

"The very reason why you should not go," the doctor replied, as he quietly set her down in a chair by his step-mother, and then went striding off in the direction of the meadow, where Marguerite was now raking up the hay with a will, while her father pitched it into the cart, where Jack received it.

She was fond of everything which took her into the open air, and as she said, she could have made a good farmer, had she been a man. She certainly made a most striking picture in her white wrapper, one lace ruffle of which was torn and trailing on the ground. Her hat, around which a wisp of hay was twisted with the wreath of lilacs, had fallen back from her head, showing her bright, glowing face, as she bandied jokes with Jack, who thought he had never been happier in his life, except at the circus or a dog show. Stopping suddenly on the load of hay, he exclaimed, with a jerk of his head towards the lane in the distance, "Hallo, Margret, there comes Dr. Catheron, puffing like a steam engine. I'll bet mother's in a fit and he's come to tell us. I wish she'd waited a spell, for, at the rate we are going on, we could get the hay all in to-night, if you didn't get tuckered out." Then spying the draggled lace, he continued: "I guess your petticoat is coming off. Hadn't you better hitch it up before the doctor gets here?"

Marguerite dropped her rake, pinned up the lace, adjusted her hat upon her head, and pulling off one of her gloves, was looking rather ruefully at the little blister between the thumb and forefinger of her right hand, when the doctor came up with a look of surprise and admiration upon his face, while there came into his mind the first two lines of Whittier's Maud Muller:

"In the meadow fresh and gay,
Sweet Maud Muller raked the hay."

And truly he thought Maud Muller could never have been half as fair, with her bare ankles and tattered gown, as this girl, who, without the slightest embarrassment, turned her laughing eyes upon him and offered him her hand. It was very moist and warm and white, and the doctor must have pressed it harder than he knew, for with a little cry, Marguerite drew it quickly from him, saying in apology, "Excuse me, but I believe that rake has raised a blister."

"Let me see it," the doctor said anxiously, taking the hand again in his very gently, "Yes, there is a blister, which my awkwardness has made worse by rubbing off the skin. I must prescribe for it when we get to the house. Your hand is very tender, Miss Rathburn," he continued, still holding it in his, and thinking how like a piece of cotton wool it looked in his broad palm.

Nobody but Harry had ever held Marguerite's hand in just this way, and with a thought of him she drew it back and began to put on her glove preparatory to returning to the house. She made

no excuse for her dress, although she would rather not have been caught in just that plight, and she chatted with perfect ease as she walked up the lane with the doctor, who felt that he had never seen a lovelier girl than this one beside him, wearing his roses, with a wisp of hay twisted round her hat. Alice was lovely, and Nannie was like a sweet wild flower, but Marguerite was beautiful, and something of his admiration expressed itself in his voice and manner, but vanished the moment they reached the house, where Nannie was standing in the door, a striking contrast in her gingham frock with her hair worn in a knot low in her neck, not for conscience sake this time, but because she had been too tired to curl it. She was watching the two as they came towards her, and thinking what a grand-looking couple they were.

"He is just tall enough for her, and right every way. I don't believe that Mr. Bellamy is half as nice," she thought, while the doctor was thinking, "She has worked beyond her strength to-day, and needs another airing," and after Marguerite had been presented to Mrs. Catheron, and the talk between them was in full swing, he said to Nannie, "Get your hat and let me drive you out. The air will do you good, You seem tired and jaded."

"Yes, Nannie, please go. You do look pale; Mrs. Catheron will excuse you," Marguerite said, and in a few moments she was speeding along the road behind the fleet horse and beside the doctor, from whom she always gathered strength and courage.

He was so kind, and knew so well how to bring out all the best in her, as well as her inmost

thoughts, and he managed to find out nearly all that had happened since Marguerite came home.

"Now tell me everything you have done to-day," he said, so naturally that Nannie told him, and how her back was aching, and asked him if he thought the bunch was growing.

"No," he answered, "but it will if you work so hard; you must not do it. You must have your sister help you."

"Oh, she did," Nannie hastened to say, but when he asked, "what did she do?" she hesitated a moment, and tried to think; then added brightly, "Why, she flirted the towel to let them know dinner was ready."

At this announcement the doctor laughed heartily. "Flirting the towel must have been a prodigious help," he thought, and he continued to laugh, while Nannie, without exactly knowing why, laughed with him, and in this merry mood they drove up to the door of the farm-house, where Marguerite was waiting for them. She had gotten on quite well with Mrs. Catheron, who was very gracious to her, and as both had been abroad they found many common topics of interest about which to talk. Marguerite had also inquired for Miss Grainger, and had noted the expression of pain which came into Mrs. Catheron's face as she answered the inquiries, and her evident desire to change the conversation. But at last Paris and Switzerland and Saratoga were exhausted, and Marguerite began to cast anxious glances along the highway, hoping to see the doctor and Nannie returning, and wondering why they were gone so long.

"He must be fond of her," she thought, 'to be so solicitous about her. First, a ride on Nero this morning, and now a drive after that handsome chestnut mare. Will he ever ask me to drive with him, or ride on Nero, I wonder?"

And then, remembering the gallops she had taken with Harry in the *Bois de Boulogne* and Hyde Park, and the expensive riding habit, which was her mother's last purchase in London, she was trying to imagine how she would look in it with the doctor at her side, when she saw the carriage coming, and a moment after the doctor was lifting Nannie out as carefully as he had taken her from Nero's back in the morning, while in Nannie's eyes Marguerite fancied she saw the same look which she knew must have shone in hers when Harry Bellamy first told her he loved her.

"Happy Nannie," she thought, conscious of a feeling of disquiet she could not define. She only knew that Dr. Catheron had a power to move her strangely, and that he was just the type of man she used to dream about as her ideal,—a cross between the North and South, possessing all the courtliness of the latter with the strength of the former,—and the woman whom he called his wife, whether it were Alice or whether it were Nannie, would be blessed indeed.

All this passed rapidly through her mind as the doctor came into the house, and seating himself close to her, said laughingly, "Now I must make my call upon you, Miss Rathburn. But first I must treat you professionally. Let me see that hand, please."

She gave it to him, while he applied a soothing lotion he chanced to have in the case he had brought with him, knowing Mrs. Rathburn would ask for some medicine. As the skin was broken he bound it up with a bit of soft linen which Nannie brought him, and then relinguished it rather unwillingly, for it was a very pretty hand to hold, and as he held it something in his own strong mesmeric nature told him that something in Marguerite's responded to his, and his eyes rested very kindly upon her, as he said, "Perhaps I'd better see it again to-morrow. I shall be coming this way."

Marguerite knew that her hand would not need any further attention, but if he wished to make it an excuse for calling to see Nannie she was willing, and smiled her assent. For a time the conversation was upon indifferent subjects, the doctor proving himself a brilliant talker, while Marguerite felt sure that he was studying her very closely, and wished that he had not caught her *en deshabille*, with her soiled and torn muslin gown, her hair tumbled and lying loose in her neck, and a stain from her glove upon her wounded hand which might be mistaken for dirt. But it was too late to apologize, and she talked gaily on, until at last, when something was said of Saratoga, the doctor took a letter from his pocket, and, turning to his step-mother, said, "By the way, I had a letter this morning from Mrs. Bellamy, who it seems is in New York. She is going to Saratoga the first of August and writes to ask if your house is unoccupied and if she can have it for a month. This is her letter, which, perhaps, you'd

better answer. She did not know whether you were here or not and so wrote to me."

He passed the letter to Mrs. Catheron, who read it rapidly, saying as she did so, "Grace Bellamy in New York, when I supposed she was still in Europe. The last I heard from her she was in Paris. That was in February, and she wrote that her son was engaged to a great heiress of an excellent family."

Marguerite's cheeks were scarlet, but the doctor, who had picked up her hat from the floor where she had lain it and was playing with the wreath of lilacs and the twist of hay, did not look at her as he replied, "And so the fastidious young man is caught at last. I should like to see the lady who is worthy to be Mrs. Harry Bellamy, in the mother's estimation, at least. Harry is a good enough sort of fellow, if he would try to make something of himself besides a mere man of fashion. But his mother is more to be blamed than he. She has brought him up in idleness, and rules him entirely, I believe. Who is the lady?"

Marguerite's hands were clenched so tightly together that the blistered one pained her frightfully, but she neither moved nor spoke, as Mrs. Catheron replied, "She did not tell me her name. She only said a great heiress of an excellent family and very beautiful, and that the engagement was not then announced, but would be when both parties returned to America. So, I suppose, we shall hear of it soon. Is it possible that it can be Lucy Grady, who is a distant relative and ward, I believe, of Mrs. Bellamy?"

"No—o," the doctor answered quickly, "Harry

could never be induced to marry her, even by his mother, who, you say, wrote you that the girl was beautiful, while Lucy is a little, plain, sandy-haired woman, older by some years than Harry."

The doctor had nearly twisted the hay from the hat by this time, and suddenly remembering himself, he turned to Marguerite and said, "I beg your pardon, Miss Rathburn, for spoiling the picturesqueness of your bonnet, as well as for talking so much of the Bellamys, who, as strangers, cannot interest you."

Marguerite simply nodded her head, and taking her hat from him arose to say good-bye, as they were going.

"Isn't the doctor splendid?" Nannie said, as the carriage rolled away.

But there was no one to answer, for Marguerite had fled up the stairs to her room, and throwing herself upon the lounge, burst into a violent fit of weeping. Not as she had wept the previous night when her heart was breaking with homesickness and loneliness, but with a sense of humiliation and shame that she should sit quietly by and hear herself and Harry discussed and give no sign. Why he had not told them that she knew Harry Bellamy and his mother she did not know.

"It was dreadful to sit there and hear them talk at the heiress and the excellent family," she whispered just as Nannie came up, and seeing her crying guessed in part the cause.

She, too, had grown very red when the Bellamys were being discussed, and had felt indignant at the rather light praise given to Harry, but as Marguer-

ite did not speak, she had kept silent, especially, as no word had as yet passed between her and Marguerite on the subject of her engagement. Now, however, she felt at liberty to speak, and asked, "Is it because of what was said of Harry? I think it was mean to speak of him as if he were weak and lazy, and ruled by his mother. It is not true, of course, or you could not love him; and is she so very proud?"

"Yes, oh, yes, it is all true," Marguerite sobbed. "Harry is influenced by his mother, who is very proud, and I am nobody now, you know, and it is all ended between us. I have told Harry so. He understands that I can never be his wife."

"But he surely does not acquiesce in it? He would be meaner than dirt to do that. He will not let you go. He will write; he will come, and you will be so happy. I shall hate him, if he don't," and Nannie stamped her foot as if she would thus trample down the offending Harry, if he dared to give up her sister for the loss of her money.

The loss of position she did not take into account. She was accustomed to think herself and family as good as any one of her acquaintance, and did not understand the word caste in its broadest sense, or dream that such people as Mrs. Bellamy would shrink from an alliance with the family of a poor country farmer like her father more than from poverty itself.

Meanwhile the doctor and Mrs. Catheron had reached home and learned from Evans that Alice was very nervous on account of their long absence, and was waiting anxiously to see them. So they went to her at once, and found her with a light in

' eyes which both knew and dreaded. Sitting
vn beside her the doctor tried to soothe and quiet
, saying to her very gently, "Why, Allie, what
the matter, and why are you so excited? I
ught you were better this morning."
Vith an impatient gesture Alice repulsed the
d which would have taken hers, and exclaimed,
) I was better, and glad to have you go to see
, but I didn't think you would stay so long.
o hours by the clock! You must have found
very attractive. But it will do you no good,
she is engaged. Nannie told me so long ago,
I kept it to myself just to see if you would fall
)ve with her. She is engaged to a Mr. Harry
amy, whose mother I think mamma knows."
ad Alice dealt him a sharp blow, the doctor
ld not have started more suddenly than he

Harry Bellamy!" he repeated, glancing at his
-mother, who was equally astonished, and was
king the same thought with himself. Why had
· been so indiscreet, and how Marguerite must
? been wounded by their talk of her prospective
her-in-law and her affianced husband.
)th now remembered the air of constraint which
come over her at the last, and understood it
ectly. But neither spoke to the other, as it
led all their efforts to quiet Alice, who at last
in to cry, as she usually did when the paroxysm
over. Smiling up at the doctor through her
; she said, "Forgive me, Guy. I am so foolish,
weak, and sick, and shall be gone so soon. Only
le while longer and you can bring Marguerite

here if you like, and she will come. She ought to prefer you to Harry Bellamy, for you are the dearest and best man in all the world, and I love you so much, Guy; oh, so much, that I am jealous of everybody but Nannie. I am willing she should take my place because she is not my superior, as her sister is. But that will never be, for she, too, will die as I shall. I dreamed about it this afternoon while you were gone; dreamed that we were in Heaven, and came one day floating together to the Pines, and found Marguerite here with you, so beautiful and sweet, and you so happy with her, that even Nannie's grave and mine were quite neglected; just sunken holes, that was all. And we kissed each other sadly, Nannie and I, she hovering over Marguerite and I over you, as you sat with your arm around her on the rose satin couch down-stairs and called her your darling wife. You had just brought her home and the wind was blowing softly through the open door and moving the lace curtains behind you, where we stood looking on. And we said to each other, 'Forgotten, forgotten. Let us go back to Heaven,' and we went back to a grassy nook on the river, and then I woke up so mad because you were gone so long. But you'll forgive me, and let me lay my head upon your shoulder just as hers was lying in my dream, for I am so tired."

Dr. Catheron put her head upon his shoulder and kissed the face which he knew would never grow round and rosy again. And lying thus Alice fell asleep, while the doctor sat supporting her, with his brain in a wild tumult as he recalled what he

had said of Mrs. Bellamy and Harry in the presence of Marguerite.

"It is all true," he thought, "and God pity her because it is true. The Marguerite Rathburn of three months ago, a reputed heiress and daughter of Mrs. James Rathburn, was a very different person from the Marguerite Rathburn of to-day, penniless and the daughter of a poor farmer, and Mrs. Bellamy will be the first to know the difference and will never rest until she has separated her son from her."

He knew Mrs. Bellamy to be a proud, selfish woman of fashion, caring less for what was right than for the opinion of her world, while of Harry, whom he did not know as well, he had said that he was a good enough sort of a fellow if he would only try to make something of himself, and that in the presence of the girl to whom he was engaged.

"How she must despise me for it, and I know now that I read her contempt in her eyes, when she said good-bye, and such eyes!" he thought, feeling again the thrill which had possessed him when they looked at him in the hay-field with an expression which affected him as no eyes had ever affected him before.

Since the first time he saw Marguerite in her ball dress in Paris, a thought of her had frequently haunted him, but lovely as she had been then in her festive attire, she was not half as attractive as he had found her in her muslin gown and straw hat, and during the walk in the lane she had fascinated and charmed him just as she charmed and fascinated every one with whom she came in contact. But

after that, he had looked into Nannie's tired face and drawn from her all she had done that day, and there had come a reaction, and he had felt that, beautiful as Marguerite might be, she was probably indolent and thoughtless and helpless, with no special gift for anything pertaining to the household, except to "flirt the towel." He laughed again as he recalled Nannie's earnest manner of telling him that Marguerite had "flirted the towel to let her father and Jack know dinner was ready." Another case of Dora holding the pens, he thought. And yet he was sure that Marguerite was not a Dora, and that there was in her the making of a splendid woman, if circumstances were favorable for it.

"She is not fitted for Harry Bellamy any way," he thought, and looking down upon the sleeping Alice and remembering what she had said in her fit of jealousy, he tried to imagine what it would be to have Marguerite Rathburn there with him at the Pines as its mistress.

Then as he glanced again at Alice, who was now moving uneasily, and was about to awake, he put aside all thoughts of Marguerite, except so far as to wonder how he could take back his thoughtless words of Harry Bellamy and make his peace with her.

"I'll see her to-morrow," he said, "and apologize for the blunder. I'll make that hand an excuse to call. I am half glad she blistered it."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DOCTOR'S TEA PARTY.

he nex‹ afternoon about three o'clock Dr. Cath-
ı rode on his horse Nero up to the gate of the
ı-house, where he found Nannie sitting on the
:-step mending a rent in a muslin dress which he
gnized as the one Marguerite had worn in
hay-field. At sight of him Nannie stiffened at
:, for he had fallen a little in her good opinion
ɜ he had spoken as he did of Harry Bellamy the
ious day and made Marguerite cry, and she had
ded to give him "a piece of her mind," and tell
that he was quite mistaken with regard to
ry. But Nannie was not proof against the doc-
magnetism, and soon thawed under the influence
s genial smile and manner as he stood chatting
her after having paid a visit to her mother,
m he found suffering with a nervous apprehen-
of a tumor or cancer, she didn't know which,
was positive that one or the other was develop-
After assuring her that she had neither a
er nor a tumor, and succeeding in quieting her,
loctor went back to Nannie and asked for Mar-
ite and her blistered hand.
)h, that's all right, and does not trouble her at
Nannie said, adding that she had gone with
to Millville on horseback. "Jack rode old Ped-
she said, "and borrowed Mr. Greene's pacer
Marguerite. She has taken lessons in riding,
has such a pretty habit and hat. She is not

afraid of any horse and would look splendidly on Nero."

The doctor smiled quietly at this hint, and said, "I am sorry not to see her, for I want to apologize for what I said yesterday of Mr. Bellamy. I did not know until Alice told me that she was the girl to whom he was engaged. She must have felt hurt to hear herself and him discussed as Mrs. Catheron and I discussed them."

"Yes, she did feel hurt," Nannie said rather icily. "Nobody likes to hear her *beau* spoken of as a *good enough sort of fellow*, which means just shiftless, with no mind of his own. And it isn't true, either; he has a mind of his own, and wants to marry Marguerite just the same as he did before she lost her money. She told me so, and she had a letter this morning, four pages and crossed. I saw it when she opened it, and was so glad for her. Does that look as if he hadn't any mind of his own?" and Nannie bit off a thread in her needle with a snap.

"No," the doctor answered, with a feeling that he ought to be more glad than he was that Harry had a mind of his own and had so soon written four pages and crossed them.

He knew that in her zeal to defend Harry, Nannie was telling things which her sister might not like to have told to a stranger, but he did not try to stop her, and she went on:

"I do not say that the engagement may not be broken, but if it is, Marguerite will break it herself. I don't think that will be very nice in her, and I told her so when she suggested it. Do you think it would?"

Oh," was all the doctor said, and then, feeling
: he must not hear anything more, he changed the
versation, and invited Nannie and Marguerite to
at the Pines the next afternoon. "We have din-
now in the middle of the day," he said, "and tea
be at six. The carriage will come for you at
You must excuse a verbal invitation, as Mrs.
ieron did not——" he was going to add—"have
: to write," but checked himself before he had
red the prevarication. For in fact Mrs. Cath-
ı knew nothing about it, as the idea had been
ı on the instant, from his great desire to see
guerite again, and apologize for what he had
of Harry.
ıst what Mrs. Catheron would say he did not
w, nor did he particularly care, as he was master
is own house, and during his round of visits that
ning he was thinking much more of Marguerite
the walk in the lane, and the touch of her hand
lay in his, than of his patients, who found him
ıually absent-minded and taciturn, and said after
vas gone that Miss Grainger must be a great
worse, and pitied him accordingly. But alas
Alice. She did not once come into the doctor's
l except when some one inquired for her, and
a his professional visits were made he involun-
y turned Nero's head in the direction of Mill-
, with a hope that he might possibly meet
guerite and Jack on the road. Nor was he dis-
ıinted, for just as he turned a corner which
ght the village into view he saw them at a little
nce, but riding away from him in another
:tion towards home. Jack, who was urging old

Pedler to his utmost speed, saw him at the same moment and said to his sister, "Hallo, there's the doctor on Nero. Brace up, Margret, and put that old cob through, and let him see how you can ride. Get up, you lazy thing!" and he struck the *cob* a smart blow, which sent him flying along the road at a speed which Pedler tried in vain to equal.

"She rides well, although a little too fast," the doctor said to himself admiring the tall, slim figure which sat so erect in the saddle, and wondering how it would look on Nero. "We will try it some day," he thought, as he turned his horse towards home, where he told what he had done to Mrs. Catheron, who took it very quietly and without any protest.

She had been pleased with Marguerite, and was quite as sorry as the doctor for what had been said of the Bellamys, although she knew it was true, and that the mother would, if possible, break the engagement.

"I pity the girl," she thought, "and if I can help her in any way I will," and in the letter which she wrote to Mrs. Bellamy regarding the house in Saratoga, she added, as a P. S., "By the way, I called upon Miss Marguerite Rathburn yesterday, and can most heartily congratulate you upon your future daughter-in-law. She is very beautiful, and seems to be highly accomplished and amiable."

"That may do some good, although I have but little faith in Grace where money is concerned," she thought, as she folded the letter, which she was directing when the doctor entered the library and told her what he had done.

A tea party just then was a little out of place she knew, but she made no objection, and said she would give the necessary orders and tell Alice, who, she hoped, would not object. Nor did she.

"I am glad," she said, "for I want to see her, and I am going to like her, and you must bring her to my room at once, and make me very nice to look at. I shall wear my pink satin tea gown, which gives me a little color, and fix the shades so I shall not look so awfully thin as I do sometimes in full sunlight."

Meanwhile Marguerite had returned from her ride looking brighter and happier than Nannie had seen her before. The exercise had done her good, and Harry's letter had done her good, too, for no girl is proof against protestations of love from the man to whom she is engaged, even if she has tried to free him from the engagement.

"I shall never give you up, no matter what mother says," he wrote. "I'd be a cad to do that just because you are poor. Why, I am poor, too, mother says. She has been telling me a lot about our losses and how we must economize, and she has brought Lucy Grady to the front, as if I'd look at her, with her light hair and eyes and spectacles. I'd as soon marry my grandmother. Nice enough girl, and stands up for you splendidly, but she is not my style. No, Madge, you stick to me, and I will to you, although, I suppose, we shall have to wait till something turns up. Maybe there'll be a boom on Tacoma, or Spokane, where I have some stumps and stones. So keep up your courage, and when

we are in Saratoga, if we go there, I shall run up to see you."

Marguerite read this part of the letter two or three times, knowing from its nature that Mrs. Bellamy had already commenced the work she meant to accomplish.

"Poor Harry, I do believe he is fond of me and means what he says, but I cannot marry him. I will not be an unwelcome daughter-in-law. I am too proud for that," she said, as she folded the letter and involuntarily thought of Dr. Catheron, and wondered if he would have written her in just the same way Harry had. "Of course not, for he is a man, and Harry is only a boy," she added, as she put the letter away, hoping that her lover would not come to the farm-house, and despising herself for not wishing to have her family seen by any of her city friends.

She enjoyed her ride with Jack very much, and went all over Millville, where she attracted unusual attention, for even the boys in the great factories hung from the windows to look after her as she galloped by with Jack, who was well known to them, and after whom and Pedler a few of the lower type called out, "My eye, what a hoss to be ridin' with such a swell!"

Marguerite did not hear them, but Jack did, and mentally registered a vow to give those Millvillians "the tallest kind of a lickin'," a vow which he tried to keep, but got the worst of it, as one against five usually does.

The doctor's invitation to tea surprised Marguerite, and had she been in the city, hedged round with the etiquette which requires that one must

l to his grief for the loss of a friend by secluding
iself from the world until such time as Mrs.
indy says he may let up enough to look out of
window at least, she would have declined.
t Rocky Point was not New York, and Nannie
s so pleased, while she herself confessed to a
ire to see the Pines and Alice Grainger, that she
sented to go, and, at a little after five o'clock,
s driving through the beautiful grounds which
rounded the house on three sides and were just
r at their best.

Oh, this is lovely; this is like the English parks,
exclaimed, as she looked eagerly from side to
e at the fountains and flowers and trees and
ubs, and rustic summer houses and bridges over
ttle brook, which made the place like a garden.
did not suppose there was anything in Rocky
nt as pretty as this," she said to the doctor, who
t them at the door and conducted them into the
ge square hall, where Mrs. Catheron received
m, and then led the way up the grand staircase
a little boudoir, where they were to leave their
s and shawls.

Everything was in perfect taste, and as Marguer-
glanced around her she felt that it was a bit of
old life come back to her, and insensibly her man-
was more in the Grand Duchess style than ever
she went down to the drawing-room and heard
swish of her long train as it swept the heavy
pet. Her black dress, of some soft, silky
terial fitted her perfectly, and was most artistically
ped around her tall figure, which Dr. Catheron
ught the finest and most graceful he had ever

seen, as he watched her moving around the room, examining the statuary and pictures, and by her comments showing how perfect was her taste, and how thorough her knowledge of art.

"Will you go now and see my daughter? She is waiting rather impatiently for you," Mrs. Catheron said, after a little, and a moment later Marguerite was in the room, where she found Alice dressed in her pink satin tea gown, with a bunch of roses beside her, and her short hair clustering in waves and curls around her forehead and over her head.

She was very pale about her mouth, and her hands were white as marble, but there was a flush on her cheeks, and her eyes were unusually bright and almost wild in their expression as they looked at Marguerite. Like Dr. Catheron, Marguerite had something in her manner and voice which appealed to every one and brought out the best there was in them, and the moment her sympathetic smile broke over her face, Alice unclasped her hands, and reaching both of them to her visitor, said, "Oh, Marguerite, please let me call you that. I have said it so often and thought of you so much, and I am so glad to see you, and I am going to like you." Then she turned to Nannie and continued: "She is more beautiful than I anticipated, with so much force in her face. It makes me stronger to look at her. Sit there, please, where I can see you."

This last was to Marguerite, who sat down in the chair indicated, feeling somewhat embarrassed at the curious and searching gaze of the eyes, in which there was a look she could not fathom, and which made her so uneasy that she finaliy moved to avoid

But Alice immediately bade her come back, saying as she did so, "You don't know of how much of my thoughts you have formed a part since Guy saw you in Paris. I am queer in some respects, they say, and when I get an idea in my brain it usually stays there, and you are one of the ideas."

Then changing the conversation she began to talk on indifferent subjects, but always with her eyes on Marguerite, who felt as if under a spell and was glad when tea was announced and the doctor led her away.

After the tea was served Nannie went back to Alice's room, while the doctor asked Marguerite to go with him into the garden, as he wished to show her a new variety of rose which was in full bloom. For several minutes they walked up and down between the borders of roses, the doctor gathering one here and another there, while he descanted upon their merits, and was delighted to find that his companion knew almost as much about them as he did himself. At the foot of the garden was a summer house covered with ivy, and here they at last sat down, while Marguerite began to arrange the roses which the doctor had gathered for her. Suddenly she uttered a little cry of pain. She had thrust a sharp thorn under her thumb nail, and could not extricate it herself.

"Let me try," the doctor said, taking her hand in his.

It was the blistered hand, and between examining the blister and removing the thorn, it was some time before he released it, and when he did so, it was rather unwillingly, *it was so* white and soft and strong, and

felt so warm to his touch, so different from the little thin, shadowy hands which claimed him as their own, and whose claim he had never disputed. He thought of Alice, it is true, but it was as a brother thinks of a dear sister, who is fading from his sight, and not as he knew he could think of this peerless girl if there were no Alice or Harry Bellamy in the way. How beautiful she looked, sitting beside him apparently unconscious of, or at least indifferent to his admiration, which he felt must be obvious to her. At last, remembering why he had brought her there, he began abruptly, "Miss Rathburn, I wanted to see you alone and apologize for what Mrs. Catheron and myself said yesterday of Mrs. Bellamy and her son. It was not the place for us to discuss them any way. I need not tell you that I never dreamed you were the young lady to whom Mr. Bellamy is engaged. I hope you will forget it, or at least excuse it."

Marguerite's face was crimson, as she replied, "Of course you did not know it, and I am half sorry you know it now, although what you said of Mrs. Bellamy is all true, I believe, but Harry——" Here she stopped a moment and then went on rapidly, "Harry is different;—he thinks—well, he is not like his mother, and money is not everything to him."

She was getting a good deal confused in her desire to defend Harry and still not say too much, but the doctor came to her rescue and said, "Yes, I understand, and had I known who his *fiancee* was, I should not have said what I did. I think it will take more than his mother to turn Harry from *you*."

"Yes, oh yes," Marguerite replied, scarcely know-
what she was saying, and in her excitement
lling to pieces the finest rose in her hands, "but
eg you not to think that I don't understand it, and
ow as well as you that being what I am and not
ng what Harry thought I was, I am not—am not
'd rather not talk of it," she added, pulling
ther rose to pieces, and attacking a third so vig-
usly that the doctor feared lest the entire bou-
t should be demolished.

nd yet he wished she would go on and confirm
hint Nannie had given him, that she intended to
ak the engagement herself. But what was it to
whether she did or not, for was he not bound
pity, if not by love, to Alice, who was beginning
get very restless and uneasy at his protracted
nce, and in whose eyes there was a glitter when
guerite went in at last to say good-night.

Did you find the garden pretty, and did you
y your walk with Guy?" she asked, in a con-
ined voice, as she put out her hand.

arguerite did not know whether she had
yed her walk or not, but she said the garden
lovely, and bidding the sick girl good-bye, went
n to the carriage which was waiting to take her
Nannie home. The doctor drove them himself
e farm-house, and hitching his horse to the post,
t in, ostensibly to see Mrs. Rathburn, but really
rolong his interview with Marguerite, who fasci-
d him more than he cared to acknowledge to
elf. As a rule he was not very susceptible to
an's charms, but there was something about
guerite which greatly attracted him, and he

staid for half an hour or more, talking to her and Nannie, who, while Marguerite sat upon the door-step just where the fading daylight fell full upon her lovely face, cleared the table in the kitchen, where her father and Jack had eaten their supper, washed the dishes, strained the milk, lighted the lamp, and then sat down with an involuntary sigh of weariness, which did not escape the doctor.

"You are tired, Nannie," he said, as he arose to go. "You must not work too hard. You must let your sister help you," and as he often did, he laid his hand on Nannie's hair.

If Marguerite heard what he said about her helping Nannie she did not notice it, for all her mind was given to what she thought was intended as a caress, and which confirmed her in her belief that although Dr. Catheron was engaged to Alice Grainger, he was very fond of Nannie Rathburn.

"And I am glad," she kept saying to herself after he was gone and she was alone in her room. "Yes, very glad for Nannie, who deserves the best the world can give," and sitting down before the glass she began to arrange her hair for the night, wondering why it was that Harry's words of love and protestations that he would never give her up, failed to comfort her now as they did when she first read them. She had said that he was free, and meant what she said, and yet his fidelity to her had been very sweet and made her waver a little. But somehow matters had changed, and she was conscious that something more had come between herself and Harry than her loss of fortune and position, and she felt again the touch of the hands which had held hers while they

ricated the thorn, and heard again the voice, ich had talked to her in the garden just as Harry 'er talked. She had intended writing to Harry t night, and remembering her intention, sat down the task, thanking him first for his kindness in ıring her of his constancy, but saying that she ld not be his wife.

Nor would you wish it," she wrote "if you knew surroundings, so different from anything you e ever seen. They are exceedingly kind to me, I am learning to love them very much, but I w you better than you know yourself, and am cer- you could never make them your own as my hus- d must make my family his. They are mine, and all stand by them. And so, dear Harry, forget as soon as you can. I do not expect you to ry Lucy Grady; that would be ridiculous, ough she is so good, but there are plenty of ; nicer than I am."

er letter was a long one, but in it she made no tion of Dr. Catheron, with whom in her dreams night she stood again in the rose scented len at the Pines, and who she knew was nearer ideal than Harry could ever be.

CHAPTER XXV.

MRS. BELLAMY PROPOSES TO VISIT THE FARM-HOUSE.

Mrs. Bellamy was in the pleasant morning room of her handsome house on Madison Square, reading a letter which had just been brought to her. Near her by the window in a low cushioned chair, sat a young lady, who looked thirty, although she was really not over twenty-six or twenty-seven. Her hair was light, her eye-brows and eye-lashes light, her complexion sallow, and she wore spectacles, which, however, did not conceal the brightness of her large black eyes, her only good point, except her pleasant smile and her sweet mouth, from which no unkind or malicious word had ever issued. The girl was Lucy Grady, second cousin to Mrs. Bellamy, whose ward she had been from the age of twelve to twenty-one, and who, since that time, had lived mostly with her cousin, and felt herself quite the daughter of the family. When Lucy thought or acted at all she usually acted and thought on the right side. But she seldom did either. It was too much trouble to oppose people, and she was too indolent and easy-going for exertion of any kind. She seldom went into society because she did not like it, and seldom drove in New York because it tired her too much to get to and from the Park over the rough pavement, and when she was not sleeping she was usually huddled up in the cosiest chair in the house, eating candy and reading, sometimes books of history and general literature, of which she

s fond, and sometimes novels, of which she was
te as fond. On this occasion she was deep in
of Ouida's last productions, while on the
pet beside her was a box of bon-bons to which
hand made frequent journeys, and then after
reling to her mouth stroked caressingly what
ked like a ball of white cotton wool lying in her
and which she occasionally addressed as "Grip,
wretch," and again as "a little darling bunch
softness." Lucy never intruded her opinions
n any one, but when her advice was asked, she
e it unreservedly, and Mrs. Bellamy, or Cousin
ice, as she called her, while lamenting that her
ng kinswoman was not more attractive, knew
could be trusted to the death, and went to her
a all her troubles and perplexities.

Lucy," she said, as she finished reading her let-
which was from Mrs. Catheron, "we are going
Saratoga after all."

Yes, Cousin Grace," Lucy replied, without look-
up from the novel, while the "darling little
ch of softness," who was not on very friendly
as with Mrs. Bellamy, gave a low growl at the
ad of her voice.

Yes, we are going to Saratoga, and it will not
me a fortune, either. You remember Mrs.
heron, who was a school friend of mine, and who,
ld you, had buried herself in the country with
step-son and that queer daughter of hers. Well,
owns a very pretty little cottage at Saratoga,
ch I heard was vacant, and which I knew could
be very expensive. So I wrote asking to rent it
August, and this morning I have her answer,

which is very satisfactory. I can have the cottage at a price quite within my means. Of course I should like a larger house, but I can't afford it. My funds are so low that I must economize somewhere."

"Is that really true?" Lucy asked, with a show of interest.

"True? Of course it is true. I have told you so several times, but you never seemed to sense it," Mrs. Bellamy replied, a little sharply. "For the last three years it has been nothing but losses, until I hardly know how to keep up appearances. I had hoped that Harry would marry a fortune, and so repair the waste places, but that is all ended now."

"Yes, I remember you wrote me that Marguerite had lost her money and would be a penniless bride. I am sorry for her and Harry," Lucy said, and Mrs. Bellamy answered quickly, "She will be no bride at all, of Harry's, at least, if I can prevent it. He must marry money."

"Do you mean that Harry will throw over a girl as beautiful and as sweet as Marguerite Rathburn, because she has no money?" Lucy asked, in surprise, as she closed her book and gave Grip a squeeze which set him to barking.

"I don't exactly call it throwing her over when she herself sees the necessity of breaking the engagement and has told him he was free," Mrs. Bellamy replied, while Lucy asked, "Has Harry accepted his freedom?"

"Not yet, he is so infatuated with the girl," Mrs. Bellamy said, "but he will when he has had time to consider the impossibility of his marrying without money. Marguerite is beautiful and sweet, as you

', but sweetness and beauty will not support a
ıily."
'But couldn't Harry do something?" Lucy asked,
l Mrs. Bellamy, who was growing more and more
itated, replied, "Do something? No. What can
do? It's not his fault that he has been brought
in idleness. It is mine. You have often heard
aid that no Bellamy, or Grady, ever yet worked
his living, and I do not wish my son to be the
t to break the rule; and besides that, if she were
rth a million, her family would be an insurmount-
e obstacle to the marriage."
Her family!" Lucy repeated, with a mystified
k, and Mrs. Bellamy exclaimed, half angrily,
ucy Grady! You are enough to provoke a saint!
ertainly told you all about it when you came to
w York the day after Marguerite left us. But
ı were reading, and petting that dog, and I dare
didn't hear what I said."
Possibly not, but I am listening now," Lucy
wered meekly, and Mrs. Bellamy went on, "I
l you Marguerite was not Mrs. James Rathburn's
ıghter, but belonged to a very poor and obscure
ıily living in Rocky Point. Her father, who was
. James Rathburn's brother, is a common farmer,
o sells poultry and eggs at the Mountain House,
ere I once spent a few days some years ago, and
ere I saw him when he came with vegetables.
ey told me he was Mrs. Rathburn's brother-in-
, and I had a good look at him. A very ordinary
ı, in his shirt sleeves, and a calico shirt at that.
ink of such a man calling Harry his son!"
It would be shocking," Lucy remarked, with a

twinkle in her bright black eyes, and the glimmer of a smile around her mouth, which more resembled sarcasm than sympathy.

But Mrs. Bellamy did not observe it, and continued: "It is incomprehensible to me how Harry can be so obstinate after what Marguerite told him in my hearing and all I have said to him. He still insists that he will marry her if she will marry him, and I believe he is weak enough to do it, unless he is prevented. Oh, Lucy, how I wish you had been born a few years later, or Harry a few years earlier, or that——"

She did not complete the sentence, for as she talked she had grown more and more excited, until the sound of her voice had fully roused the sleeping Grip, who, never fancying her much, felt it time for him to interfere in the discussion, and rolling from Lucy's lap to the floor he began to bark furiously at the lady, making fierce charges towards her, and then running backward to the shelter of his mistress's chair. With remonstrances and gentle cuffs, and finally by twisting her handkerchief over his head, Lucy managed to quiet him, and then said, "I know what you mean; you wish I were young enough and pretty enough for Harry to fancy. But I am not, and if I were I could never marry him. He is too much like a brother for that, but if my fortune can do any good towards mending matters he is welcome to as much of it as he likes. My needs are few, and I like Marguerite very much."

"No, Lucy," and Mrs. Bellamy spoke quickly. "It is kind in you, but I will not have you make that offer to Harry, who might accept it, for even if

rguerite were rich, as I supposed she was, I ıld not take her family. Neither can Harry en he sees them, for he is very fastidious in such tters, and I intend to take him into the house and him see for himself. Mrs. Catheron, in her let- to me, said she had called upon Marguerite, and gratulated me on my future daughter-in-law. ıt looks as if the girl had wavered in her deter- ıation to give Harry his freedom, and had ounced her engagement, or how would Mrs. heron know it. I don't like it, and something ɜt be done, so I have a plan, which is this: I shall to Albany *en route* for Saratoga by way of Rocky nt, and stop for a day or two at the Mountain ıse, where I shall write a note to Marguer- telling her we will call and lunch with her. ıt will give Harry a good opportunity to see the edness of the land and cure him if anything "

But," Lucy, began, "it seems to me that is hardly ce thing to do. It is like setting a trap."

Not at all," Mrs. Bellamy rejoined quickly. e have a right to call upon her; it would hardly ivil not to when we are as near as the Mountain ıse, and I tell you Harry must be cured."

ıst at this point the door opened and Harry e in and was immediately attacked by Grip, who not like him much better than he did Mrs. amy.

For heaven's sake, Lucy," Harry said, giving dog a little kick, "can't you make your darling ɔh of softness behave, and what is that thing

twisted round his head? See, he is biting it through I shall kill the brute some day, sure."

Grip was seized and cuffed again into silence, and, freed from the handkerchief, lay in Lucy's lap, winking and blinking at Harry, to whom Mrs. Bellamy began to unfold her plan, not of lunching at the farm-house, but of going to Saratoga and stopping on the way for a day or two at the Mountain House.

"By Jove, that will be jolly," Harry said, thinking of Marguerite, whom of course he should see, as he knew she was in that neighborhood.

He had received her letter by the same mail which brought Mrs. Catheron's to his mother, and although it was not altogether satisfactory, he was the happier for having had it. Of course it was all rubbish, her heroic talk of never marrying him, and he should convince her of it when he saw her face to face. He loved her just as well as ever and meant to make her his wife. Just how they should live if she had no money and he had none, he didn't quite know, but probably with his mother, in whose losses he did not altogether believe. Anyhow they should manage some way, even if he had to take a clerkship, which he hoped he should not. He liked his liberty and his ease. All his habits and tastes were of the most luxurious kind, and he secretly rebelled against the Catheron Cottage, which was such a contrast to the handsome house and grounds they had occupied the last time they were at Saratoga, and he believed he would rather stop at some one of the hotels, although they were getting frightfully full of common people, who used tooth-

picks at the table and made a horrid mess of their grammar. But when he reflected that Marguerite was on the road to the despised cottage, he was content, and expressed himself pleased with the arrangement.

"But I will not let Madge know I am coming. I will take her by surprise, and see how glad she will be," he thought, and thus it came about that Marguerite was kept in ignorance of the honor in store for her, and was spared some days of uneasiness, which she certainly would have experienced had she known that Mrs. Bellamy was intending to pounce upon her unawares, and coming not as a friend, but rather as an enemy bent upon doing harm.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HARRY'S DRIVE.

It was the height of the season at the Mountain House, which was a favorite resort for the people from Boston and New York, who liked quiet and rest rather than excitement and dissipation, and who enjoyed the broad, cool piazzas of the hotel and the bracing mountain air, better than the heated atmosphere of a more fashionable place. Then, too, the house had the reputation of entertaining only the very best class of people, so that it never lacked for guests from the time it opened in June until it closed in September. But there were rooms found for Mrs. Bellamy and son, and Miss Grady and

maid, who reached there one morning about the first of August, and nearly three weeks after Marguerite's arrival at the farm-house. It was a great change from the hot city pavements to the green-sward and dense shadow of the trees growing in the park, and Lucy and Harry were delighted and expressed themselves willing to stay there all the summer instead of going on to Saratoga. For Harry this was very natural, as he was near Marguerite, whom he meant to see before he slept. He had written her several times during the last two weeks, but had said nothing of his intended visit, as he wished to surprise her, and after lunch was over he told his mother where he was going, and asked if she had any message.

"Oh, Harry, you must not go to-day," Mrs. Bellamy exclaimed, "I have just sent off a note to Marguerite telling her we are here, and saying that, if agreeable, we will drive over to-morrow about half past one and lunch with her. Now if you go to-day, you will spoil everything, and undoubtedly be in the way, as I do not suppose they are burdened with servants, and they may have to make some little preparation for us. Can't you amuse yourself here a few hours?"

Harry supposed he could, and having fallen in with an acquaintance made in Europe, he passed the time very pleasantly until after dinner, which was served at five. Then he accepted an invitation to drive with the young man, who took him through the many shady roads which wound through the leafy woods and over the hills, and terminated, some of them, suddenly in a lane, at the end of which was

old New England farm-house, with its slanting
f, its tall well-sweep on which the oaken bucket
ung, while a pile of wood and chips were decay-
in the hot sun, and near the open doors flocks of
is and chickens fed, with a tall, red-headed rooster
itting in their midst, and a sleeping dog, whose
ning bark brought several children to the win-
v to look at the passers-by. All this was very
al, of course, and such as befitted the homes of
mountaineers, but Harry, who knew very little
he country, shivered as he remembered that in
ie such place Marguerite was living, only better,
ourse, a great deal better, and he felt an intense
re to see it, if possible. So, every time they
ied a farm-house he asked his friend, whose name
Travers, if he knew who lived there.

No, how should I?" Travers would reply. "And
are you so anxious to know the names of these
nudgeons?"

Oh, for nothing in particular," Harry answered,
ly there's a farmer living somewhere round here
he name of Rathburn. I should like to see his
se."

There's a wretch of a boy stoning a poor old
horse. You might ask him," Travers suggested,
as they came up to a ragged urchin who was
ing a forlorn horse to his utmost speed by means
ones and bits of mud, Harry called out, "I say,
little rascal, why are you stoning that horse
that?"

So'se to make him go 'lang," was the reply, as
boy dropped one or two pieces of brick, and
d at his interlocutor, who continued: "He is

going as fast as he can. Suppose you let him alone and tell me where Mr. Rathburn lives, a kind of gentleman farmer, I believe," he added, without at all knowing why he did so.

"Oh, you git out," the boy said, scornfully. "I don't know no gentleman farmers in these parts, except Dr. Catheron, and he ain't a farmer. He's a doctor, he is; but if you mean old John Rathburn, he lives about half a mile ahead, over the hill, in a red house, with the grine-stun close to the well, and a big popple tree acrost the road that's been struck with lightnin'."

Just what a *grine-stun* was, neither Travers nor Harry knew, but the *popple* tree, which had been struck by lightning, would guide them, and they drove on in the gathering twilight until they reached the top of the hill, from which they could see at no great distance the farm-house, which, with its surroundings, bore little resemblance to the place in which Harry in imagination had always seen Marguerite. A large stone building, with wide piazzas and Corinthian pillars standing in the midst of grounds nearly as large as those at the Mountain House, was what he had pictured to himself as Marguerite's home, and he was sure that there must be some mistake. By this time they had descended the hill and reached the declivity on which the farm-house stood. Side by side with the road was a long lane leading down to the pasture lands, and through the lane several cows were moving slowly homeward, driven by a boy, who was urging them onward, for it was growing dusk and past the milking time. The boy, who was apparently fourteen

fifteen, and was whistling "Captain Jenks the Horse Marines," at the top of his bent, as in his shirt sleeves and bare-headed, with a tch on his trowsers, and something in his appear-ce reminded both the young men of the whistling y in the play of the "Old Homestead," which they d recently seen in New York.

'Probably one of the farm hands, although I don't lieve this is the place. I mean to inquire," Harry ought, and he called out, "Hello, young man," while ello yourself," came back in a cheery voice, as aptain Jenks" came suddenly to an end, and Jack, it was he, turned toward the strangers.

Does Mr. John Rathburn live here?" Harry ed.

Yes sir," Jack replied. "Want to see him?"

No, thanks," Harry answered, "I only wanted to w if he lived here."

hen the air of "Captain Jenks" floated out again the night air as the buggy drove slowly on, and rry looked eagerly at the house. In the kitchen llow candle had just been lighted by Nannie, through the open door Harry saw the candle ding upon the table, and saw a little figure flitting and forth before it, and saw the well curb near door, and saw the row of bee hives not far from nd something, which in the dusk he could not e make out, but thought it might be the grind-e. He saw the orchard in the rear, the yard in t, the horse block by the gate, and the big le tree, and wondered if Marguerite were really e, and what she would say if she knew he were ear. As long as he could see the house he kept

looking back, until Travers said to him, "I say, Hal, why are you so much interested in that particular old rookery? I do believe there is some fair milk-maid hidden there. I mean to find out."

"Don't," Harry said, so earnestly that Travers burst into a laugh and exclaimed, "By Jove, I've hit it. There is a milk-maid; or, yes, now I remember having heard a few days ago that there was a beautiful young lady somewhere in the neighborhood, city bred and accomplished and all that, exchanged when she was a child for somebody else, just the way the stories go in novels, you know, and that she has been sent back to some farm-house or other, this old red one, of course, with the *grine-stun* and the *popple* tree, struck by lightning. I heard, too, that she had a lover, who had jilted her because she was poor."

"It's a lie! I never jilted her," Harry exclaimed, so energetically that Travers bounced up from his seat and said, "So, I have struck it after all. Tell me about it, Hal."

"Not now," Harry answered. "You see we are nearly home," and a few moments after he was sitting on the piazza of the Mountain House, talking to his mother and Lucy of the delightful drive he had had with Travers

CHAPTER XXVII.

MARGUERITE RECEIVES MRS. BELLAMY'S NOTE.

)uring the three weeks which had elapsed since rguerite came home, she had become somewhat ustomed to life at the farm-house, and time did hang quite so heavily on her hands. Her ıer's coarse clothes and rough appearance as a d working farmer did not seem so bad, nor did k's grammar and boyish slang shock her as it had e at first, while for her mother's weakness she a profound pity. Of Tom and old Brindle she made fast friends, and the latter always lowed ın he saw her, while Tom, forgetting the tin pan the boys from which Nannie had rescued him, in a way forsaken his allegiance to his first love attached himself altogether to Marguerite, who as fond of cats as Nannie and whom he followed the fidelity of a dog. As for Nannie, Marguer- wondered at herself when she reflected how h she had learned to love the dear little girl was the life and sunshine of the house, and who ed upon her as if she had been an empress, and t all so easily and quietly that it hardly seemed she did it at all. Nearly every day Dr. Cath- called, ostensibly to see Mrs. Rathburn, but y to chat with Marguerite, whom he sometimes d with her mother, whose verses she occasion- copied, sometimes sitting listlessly on the door- with Tom in her lap, but oftener under the e tree, where every fine morning Nannie

brought a piece of old carpet and an easy chair and told her to enjoy herself.

"You look so pretty in your white gown and big hat with the lilac wreath, sitting there in the shade, that it rests me to see you when I am at work," Nannie said, and she might have added that she was very proud of the attention which her sister attracted from the people who went by, and who always turned to look at and comment upon the beautiful girl whose story they knew.

And so, while Nannie in the hot kitchen baked and ironed and scrubbed, Marguerite sat in the cool shade on the carpet under the maple tree, and received the homage of the passers-by and the calls of Dr. Catheron, whose coming she found herself anticipating and in whom she was growing more and more interested. After his talks with Marguerite, the doctor always looked in upon Nannie, who never admitted that she was tired.

"And if I were the sight of you would rest me," she said, and so the doctor sometimes lingered longer with her than with Marguerite, who once surprised him holding Nannie's hand, which he dropped as she came in.

Thinking that he detected in her feverish symptoms, he had been counting her pulse as he often did. But this Marguerite did not know, and the action confirmed her in the belief that the doctor cared more for Nannie than he did for Alice. During the last three weeks she had been at the Pines several times to see the sick girl, who was always very quiet and happy with her. They did not talk much together, for Alice was too weak for

that now, but Marguerite read to her from the books she liked best, and told her of the many places she had visited, while Alice lay, with her great, bright sunken eyes, sometimes closed and sometimes fixed earnestly on the face she thought so lovely.

Once Marguerite heard her whisper, "Go away, go away. I shall not say it," and when she asked in some surprise what she meant, Alice replied, "Nothing much, I was only talking to my other self. There are two natures in us all, a Hyde and a Jekyll, you know, and the bad Alice sometimes tells me to say nasty things to the people I like best, you for instance, whom I did not always like. Do you expect to marry Mr. Bellamy?"

The question was so sudden that Marguerite half started from her chair, as she involuntarily replied, "No, oh no; all that had to end with my old life."

"I thought so," and Alice nodded with a kind of satisfied air. "I am generally right in my convictions, for lying here, dying by inches as I am, I sometimes slip away from myself into another atmosphere, as it were, and have presentiments and see things which are going to happen. Clairvoyance you may call it, or occultism, or whatever you like. I call it my spells when my brain is queer, and once in such a spell I told Nannie of her future, when she would have a whole loaf instead of a few crumbs. I thought then I knew who would give her the loaf, but I was mistaken, and since I have seen you, things are clearer. The lights and shadows have changed and you and Mr. Bellamy have changed with them. You are not near him now, but here, where I

once thought to be, and some day, side by side, you and he will stand together and look upon me dead, and I shall know, but shall not care."

This was a great deal for Alice to say at one time, and before Marguerite, who was bewildered, could reply, she began to cough so violently that Evans was summoned to the room, and when the paroxysm was over, and Alice lay, panting and exhausted among her pillows, Marguerite stooped down, and kissing her, said good-bye, and went away wondering at what she had heard, and what Alice could mean. This was the morning of the day when Mrs. Bellamy arrived at the Mountain House and Harry took his drive with Travers. That afternoon Marguerite was sitting as usual under the maple tree, with a volume of Tennyson's poems in her hand, and at her feet black Tom, rolling and kicking and making mince meat of the rosette on one of her slippers. Near her sat Nannie darning her father's and Jack's socks, and listening while her sister read aloud the story of the beautiful Queen Guinevere, and thinking as she listened and darned what a grand queen her sister would make, and wondering if Harry Bellamy were good enough for her and wishing she might see him and judge for herself. Suddenly as if in answer to her wish, there appeared at the gate a messenger boy from the Mountain House, who asked if Miss Marguerite Rathburn lived there.

"I am Miss Rathburn," Marguerite said, holding out her hand for the note the boy had brought her and which read as follows:

"Mountain House, August 3rd.

)EAR MARGUERITE,

"We arrived here this morning, Lucy Grady, ırry and I, *en route* for Saratoga, and as we came is way on purpose to see you, we will, if conıient and agreeable to you, drive over to-morw and lunch with you about 2 o'clock.

"Yours very truly,

"GRACE BELLAMY."

?or a moment Marguerite was stupefied with, azement. "Mrs. Bellamy, and Lucy Grady, and .rry coming here to lunch! Impossible!" she ught, while the blood left her face for an instant l then came surging back in crimson waves which de her cheeks and ears purple at the idea of Mrs. llamy's cold, critical eyes scrutinizing her father l Jack and her home, and then pitying and possi- despising her because of them. For Lucy and rry she did not particularly care, although she ıld rather they should stay away, but the thought Mrs. Bellamy, whose motive in coming she uely guessed, was unendurable, and she felt that would not have it. Then, hating herself for the ing, she rallied, and glancing at the boy, who was ting for an answer, as he had been told to do, she l, "Tell the lady I shall expect her."

'his was not the kind of message which she ought ;end she knew, but she was too much disturbed :are for etiquette, and she sat looking after the , and wondering how she should get through ı the morrow, until Nannie asked, "What lady you expecting?"

hen remembering that Nannie as housekeeper ıld have been consulted, Marguerite answered,

"Forgive me, Nannie, I ought to have asked you if it would be convenient to have Mrs. Bellamy here to-morrow. She is at the Mountain House, with Miss Lucy Grady and Harry, and wrote to ask if she could lunch here to-morrow afternoon. Here is her note," and she passed it to Nannie, who read it hastily, and drew a long breath of consternation as she thought, "What shall I give them to eat?"

In Nannie's mind there was no feeling of mortification or shrinking from letting the city people see her humble home. Her housewifely instincts were in the ascendant, and she was glad of the opportunity to meet Harry, and the lady who was to be Marguerite's mother-in-law, and she hastened to say so.

"But what can you do with them?" Marguerite asked. "They will make a great deal of trouble."

"Oh, I don't mind that," Nannie answered cheerully, rising with the emergency, as she always did; "I shall get up very early in the morning, and have father and Jack take their dinner with them to the field. They won't mind that, and it will save me the bother of getting their dinner at twelve o'clock. I have a fresh loaf of cup-cake which I made this morning, and some fried cakes and apple pie and a pot of Boston baked beans, which they are sure to like, and if I make some soda biscuits and coffee and have some blackberries and cream, do you think that will be enough? What do city people have for lunch?"

Marguerite gasped and grew cold as she thought of the fastidious Mrs. Bellamy sitting down before a pot of Boston baked beans, garnished with fried cakes and apple pie, but she could not make Nannie

understand how she felt, and she answered, rather despondently, "It would be impossible to get up a city lunch in Rocky Point, and I am afraid Mrs. Bellamy would not care for the beans or the fried cakes or the pie, but get what you like. I am so sorry they are coming," and she buried both her feet so energetically in Tom's sides, that with a spit and a growl he left the rosette which he had nearly demolished and started after Nannie's ball of yarn, which lay upon the grass.

Nannie's spirits sunk a little at the loss of the beans and the fried cakes and the pie, which had been her stronghold, but she soon recovered herself and went on talking about the lunch, telling Marguerite not to worry as everything was sure to be right.

"The best table-cloth and napkins are all clean," she said, "and I know how to set the table and wait upon it, too. I have been at the Pines so much."

"You wait upon the table," Marguerite repeated in surprise, and Nannie replied, "Why, of course. I know about passing things to the left and all that, and we have a tray now, so I shan't be obliged to take a plate, as Evans did, when she came here once with Alice and waited upon the table. I shall get old Sally Marsh to stay in the kitchen and see to things, and it will go off beautifully. I have a plan in my mind. Now I must go and light the fire for supper," and she gathered up her basket of socks, and after a few cuffs and a hard struggle with Tom, succeeded in getting the ball of yarn from him.

Then she went into the house, while Marguerite sat looking after her and thinking to herself, "Nan-

nie is an angel, and I—— Well, I am not worthy to touch the hem of her garment, to be so rebellious and so proud and so ashamed of my own people;" and she alternately grew hot and cold as she thought of the elegant Mrs. Bellamy sitting at their table, upon their hard chairs, and seeing her father and Jack, and talking with her mother, who would possibly tell her of Tom Carter, whom she might have married, and read her some of her poetry. It was not a very pleasant outlook for one reared as Marguerite had been, but her nobler, better side began at last to assert itself.

"They are my people, and Mrs. Bellamy shall never know that I care," she said, as she arose and walked into the house, where Nannie was preparing the supper, from which the cup-cake was excluded, greatly to the disgust of Jack, who, when he heard of the expected guests, made a wry face."

He wished the grand city people were in Jericho, although he would like to see Margret's beau. At Nannie's suggestion, however, he ran the lawn mower over the grass in the front yard, and hoed up the flower beds and tied up a branch of a rose bush, and then started for the cows, falling in with Harry and Travers on his way home.

Meanwhile Nannie cleared away her dishes, and contrary to her custom, left them unwashed, for she had a project in her mind, which necessitated a visit to the Pines. Alice, who had been so helpful with regard to Marguerite's room, would surely tell her about the lunch, which, now that the beans and the pie and the fried cakes had been stricken from the bill of fare, troubled her somewhat; so, without a

'ord to Marguerite as to where she was going, she arted for the Pines. Alice was fresher and righter than she had been in the morning, and hen told of Nannie's perplexity, entered upon the ıbject with great enthusiasm.

" And so Mr. Bellamy is coming to see her and it ill be right after all," she said, " but you can't of ɔurse, get up a city lunch, nor will they expect it, ıt you can do very well. I'll tell you; but I had ɛtter send for Mrs. Rorer, and let you take her ɔme with you; she will be better than I am."

Nannie looked appalled at the mention of Mrs. orer, who came up before her as some grand dame, ıstling in black silk, with gold-rimmed spectacles.

" Oh, Alice," she cried in dismay, " must I have Irs. Rorer? Can't you tell me yourself? I don't ant a stranger around."

Bursting into a laugh, Alice replied, " What a little ınocent you are. I don't mean Mrs. Rorer herself, ıt her *eook book*, which tells you everything."

Ringing the bell she ordered the book brought to ɛr, and began turning the leaves rapidly until she ıund what she wanted.

" Here it is," she said, " bouillon for parties and ınches? We must have that for the first course."

Nannie, whe had never heard of bouillon listened ghast, while Alice read the receipt, which, though mple enough to a practiced cook, seemed like a ountain to her.

" I can do it, though, if I must," she said very ravely, while Alice told her how to serve it, and ırned next to chicken croquettes, which puzzled Iannie more than the bouillon had done.

But she decided to do her best, and with Mrs. Rorer and a very heavy heart, started on the road in the direction of Rocky Point. If she made the bouillon and the croquettes, she must go to the market and the grocery that night, and although it was nearly a mile out of her way, she walked it very cheerfully for the sake of Marguerite and the surprise she had in store for her, and reached home just in time to light the tallow candle which Harry Bellamy had seen on the kitchen table as he drove by. During Nannie's absence, Marguerite had sat for awhile with her mother, whom she told of the guests expected on the morrow. Mrs. Rathburn, who was delighted at the opportunity of meeting Mrs. Bellamy and her prospective son-in-law, soared so high and used so many big words that Marguerite began to dread more than ever the meeting between her mother and Mrs. Bellamy, who was sure to be disgusted.

"I wouldn't say anything about Mr. Carter and the poetry, as Mrs. Bellamy is not the woman to be interested in either," she ventured to suggest, as she kissed her mother good-night, and went to her own room, where she was sitting by the window when she caught a glimpse of the two young men, who seemed to be scrutinizing the house very closely.

But she had no suspicion who they were, until hearing Nannie in the kitchen, she went down, meeting in the doorway with Jack, who said, "Did you see them swells?"

"Those swells, you mean," Marguerite replied, and Jack continued, "Well, those swells, then, who went by in a buggy, and stared at the house as if

ey meant to know it next time! It was a Mountin House rig, and I'll bet my head one of them as your beau, or he wouldn't be so anxious to ow who lived here."

"What do you mean?" Marguerite asked, and th a hitch at one of his suspenders, which had en broken and was tied with a string, Jack replied, was driving the cows through the lane and hurring them along because it was so late, when I ard a buggy, and knew in a minute 'twas some y chap, because the horse's head was checked so gh that he could almost see over his back. The l one, who looked the most like a dude, called t, 'Hello,' 'Hello, yourself,' says I, and then he ked if Mr. John Rathburn lived here. 'Yes,' I d, 'do you want to see him?' and he answered, h, no. I only want to know if he lives here,' and n they drove on as if they were in a funeral prossion. I believe that was Mr. Bellamy."

Marguerite felt sure it was, and very soon urned to her room with a feeling far different m what a young girl usually has when expecting see her lover the next day.

Nannie was very tired with her walk to the Pines l Rocky Point, but she scarcely thought of that, re was so much still to be done by way of preing for the important lunch, and it was very late en she went to her room and sat down to read r Mrs. Rorer's directions for bouillon and croes. Then it suddenly occurred to her that as aitress she ought to have a cap, such as Bertha re at the Pines; "and I can make one, it is not ch work," she thought, and her fingers were soon

busy with a piece of muslin and blue ribbon, which she happened to have on hand, and which she fashioned into a bit of millinery which was wonderfully becoming to her.

"I think you look very nice, and Marguerite will be so surprised and pleased," she said, as she tried it on and nodded to the little face, which smiled at her from the glass, and then, just as the clock was striking twelve, she laid her tired head upon her pillow, and was soon asleep.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE LUNCH.

The next morning Nannie was up with the sun, and long before Marguerite came down, she had prepared and cleared away her father's early breakfast, swept and dusted the rooms, and cared for her mother. The chicken was cooked and the beef was cooking, and Jack, who had been sent for Sally Marsh, had returned with the startling information that it was impossible for her to come, as she was engaged somewhere else.

"Oh, Jack! I never can get through with it alone. What shall I do?" Nannie cried, in dismay, as she sank into a chair, with the first feeling of discouragement she had felt since the lunch was proposed: and she looked so distressed that Jack said to her. "What did you want Sally to do?"

"Everything!" she answered; "that is, she was
o stay in the kitchen, while I waited on the table,
nd see that things didn't get burned, and fry the
roquettes."

Jack did not quite understand the word, and said,
What's a fried coquette? She must be a pretty
ıing to eat."

"How little you know," Nannie replied, laughing
t his mistake, as she tried to explain.

"Oh, I see," Jack rejoined, "they are not girls,
ut a kind of nut-cake which you fry in a wire thing.
can do that, and I can keep the stuff from burning,
) don't you fret. Father will let me come home at
ɔon, and I'd like to be here to see the fun."

"Oh, Jack, you are the darlingest brother in the
orld," and Nannie nearly strangled him with her
rms, which she threw around his neck and which
e was shaking off as Marguerite came in.

She had slept but little and was almost as white
ıd tired as Nannie, whose pallor she noticed at
nce, and to whom she said, "Why, Nannie, what
the matter? I'm afraid you are worrying too
ıuch about the lunch. It does not matter at all
hat we have. Can I help you in any way?"

It was almost the first offer of assistance which
[arguerite had made since she came home, but
'annie declined it promptly, for if she kept her
rrangements a secret, it was necessary that Mar-
uerite should not be in the kitchen. So she
ıswered, "No, thanks, everything is going on
eautifully, and all you have to do is to amuse your-
:lf and sit awhile with mother, who has a nervous

headache this morning, and is afraid she cannot see the visitors."

Marguerite could have beaten herself at the sensation akin to gladness which arose within her at the possibility that her mother and Mrs. Bellamy might not come in contact after all. But she tried to fight it down, and went at once to her mother, whom she found with her head bandaged in cloths saturated with Pond's Extract, camphor and vinegar, the combined odor of which made Marguerite feel dizzy and faint. But she kissed her mother affectionately and listened patiently to her querulous complaints of the ill luck which always deprived her of any pleasure which she had particularly anticipated; "and I did so want to see your city friends," she said "and I wanted them to see me, for I fancy that I'm a little different from country people in general."

"Perhaps your headache will leave you before noon," Marguerite suggested, and her mother replied, "No, it won't, and if it does I shall be too sallow and worn looking to be willing to see them."

Marguerite comforted her as well as she could, and then sat down to read to her, until she heard Dr. Catheron talking to Nannie, and inquiring for her. Closing her book she went into the sitting room just as he entered it looking very cool and fresh in his light summer suit, with his soft hat in one hand and in the other a basket of flowers, which he gave to her, saying, "Alice sent these with her love, and bade me tell you that she is very glad, because she knows that you are so happy."

Marguerite took the basket from him and said, "I

ank you so much. Tell Alice it was very kind in r to send them, and that I am——"

She did not finish the sentence, for her lips could t frame the lie, and say "I am happy," so she gan to arrange the flowers while the doctor went to see her mother for a moment, and after a few ore jokes with Nannie, mounted Nero and rode ay, leaving Marguerite with a sensation that her lings were gradually undergoing a change. If . Catheron, who was equal if not superior to any n she had ever met, could find pleasure at the m-house, and respect its inmates as he evidently l, why should she care for Mrs. Bellamy and at her opinion might be.

'And I don't care," she thought, as she put the wers into vases and bowls, while her spirits rose her and higher, until at last she began in a way anticipate the coming of her visitors.

Meanwhile Nannie had been as busy as a bee, il everything was done, and she was resting hile on the bench outside the kitchen door and ning herself with her apron. Jack, who had ne from the fields about twelve o'clock, had found nging upon a peg in the wood-shed, an apron ich Sally Marsh had left there, and tying it und his neck and parting his hair in the middle a girl's, he called himself "Young Sally," l was standing before Nannie waiting for her ections.

Now, Jack," she began, "you must be very et and neither sing, nor whistle Captain Jenks, you generally do, for I don't want them to know re is a boy in the kitchen helping, and you must

see that the coffee doesn't boil over, and you must fry the croquettes on the oil stove out by the well so as to keep the smell from the dining-room; it is just awful, and makes me sick now to think of it."

She did look ready to faint, but after a few moments she rallied and went up to her room to change her dress. She would have liked to have worn her white cambric, but reflecting that so much finery would be out of place on a waitress, she put on her brown gingham and white apron, after having first brushed and arranged her hair, which fell about her shoulders like a shower of gold. It did not occur to her that the long curls would be out of place on a waitress quite as much as the white gown, or that they would be frowned upon by Mrs. Bellamy, who would not allow her maids even to crimp their hair. The cap was a great success, and looked very jaunty and pretty when perched upon the top of her head, but this was for the present to be kept from sight, and hiding it under her apron she went down stairs just as she heard the sound of wheels, and looking cautiously through the kitchen window saw an open barouche stopping at the gate, with a driver in livery upon the box and two ladies and a gentleman inside. The grand visitors had come

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LUNCH.

There had been a long discussion with regard to
ıe visit between Mrs. Bellamy and Lucy Grady,
ho had not favored it from the first, for, knowing
ɛr cousin's motive, it did not seem quite honora-
e to force themselves upon Marguerite, and thus
ke an undue advantage of her. Lucy would rather
ıve remained in her room with Grip and her box
candy and her French novel. But she was too
dolent to oppose anything very strongly, and
ɔout half-past one the trio started for the farm-
ɔuse, Mrs. Bellamy erect and dignified, with no
ıalms of conscience troubling her, Harry eager
d expectant, and looking very handsome in his
it of the latest fashion, and Lucy lounging among
e cushions, with Grip, whom she always carried
th her in her lap. The little brute, who had been
thed and combed until his silky hair was white as
ow, had a very pert, fierce expression in his eyes
he looked about him, wholly unsuspicious of the
nger awaiting him in the shape of Tom, who was
ıning himself in the grass by the door-step, and
ıtching the English sparrows flitting in and out
ıong the eaves. Harry had said nothing to his
ɔther of having passed the house the previous
ɡht, but he inadvertently let it out when they
ıched the top of the hill from which it could be
ɛn.

'That's the place," he exclaimed, while his mother

arched her eye-brows and said, "So you have been here before?"

"Yes, I drove by here last night with Travers," he answered, standing up to get a better view of the house, and conscious of a wish that Marguerite's home was more like the Pines than this old-fashioned house, which, however, looked better by daylight than it had in the twilight, when the objects were obscure and he could scarcely make out what they were. "I shall get her out of this very soon," he thought, while his mother was thinking how sure he was to be cured of his folly.

She was looking at the faded house and the grey barn in the rear, the two-wheeled ox cart standing on end and the remains of last winter's hay stack behind it. But she saw also the orchard, with its rows of apple trees, the wide-spreading maple, the fresh green grass with the sunshine falling so brightly upon it, and the rose bush trained to the trellis work, and knew that as a whole it was really better than she had expected. But it was the country which she detested, and more than that it was the home of the girl whom her son wished to marry, and who was coming down the walk to meet them, followed by Tom, whose tail and back began to swell as he caught sight of the "darling little bunch of softness," who was barking furiously at him. Marguerite was thinner than when they last saw her, but her grand duchess manner had not deserted her in the least, and she had never seemed more attractive to Harry than she did now, in her black dress and plain linen collar, as she walked down to the gate, without the slightest air of constraint, and

fered her hand to his mother, who kissed her effu-
rely, and then passed her on to Lucy Grady. But
at lady was by this time cccupied by other mat-
rs than greeting any one. The "bunch of soft-
ss" had darted through the gate into the yard,
ıere there was a grand battle in progress, a battle
short duration, it is true, but at its close Tom sat
on a bough in the maple tree, glaring with his
low eyes at poor Grip, who had a long scratch
on his nose, and was trembling in his mistress'
ns. Harry laughed immoderately, and took occa-
n during the excitement to kiss Marguerite more
es than he would have done, for he was a little
ıid of his mother, whose eyes he knew were upon
m.

I am so sorry," Marguerite said, trying to soothe
frightened animal and to apologize for Tom,
› still sat in the tree looking more like a young
r than a species of the feline race.

hey were soon in the sitting-room, into which
guerite took them rather than into the parlor,
ı its stiff hair-cloth sofa and chairs and air of
ıg kept for company ; and Mrs. Bellamy, as she
ıced around the apartment, where everything
as neat as possible, and which the flowers from
Pines brightened wonderfully, confessed to her-
again that things were not quite as bad as she
:cted. She hardly knew, it is true, what she had
:cted, but something very commonplace and not
ll like this pleasant room, where, although the
iture was cheap and plain, and showed signs of
, there was an atmosphere of refinement, which
ld have pervaded the humblest of rooms, if

Marguerite had been there as she was here, dignified and as perfectly self-possessed as when she was receiving her friends in the grandest salon which she had occupied abroad. Leaving Harry to himself for a few moments, Marguerite took the ladies to her room, over which Lucy Grady went into ecstasies, and which even Mrs. Bellamy admitted was pretty.

"Pretty!" Lucy exclaimed. "Why, it's lovely, and such a novel way to cover a bedstead and a bureau! Where did you get the idea? And such an exquisite screen, and such a charming view across the meadow lands to the hills," she continued, as she leaned from the window, still holding fast to Grip, who was shivering as if in a chill.

By the time the ladies had laid aside their wraps and returned to the sitting-room, where they talked for a few minutes on unimportant matters, it was two o'clock, and Nannie, who was punctuality itself and would have thought it a breach of hospitality to keep her visitors waiting, had everything in readiness. The bouillon was steaming hot upon the stove, the croquettes were ready to fry by the well, and Jack, in Sally Marsh's apron, was ready to fry them and to carry out as far as possible the multitudinous instructions which his sister had given him.

"I say, Nan, you look like one of the roses in the garden when it is half opened, with the dew upon it, the sweat on your face being the dew, you know, but you'd better wipe it off before you go in to wait on the grandees, and, by ginger, that thingumbob on your head is awfully becoming," he said to Nannie, as she stood before the glass arranging the little cap,

which, if anything could do so, did enhance her beauty.

She was excited, and the excitement added a brightness to her face and a sparkle to her eyes, when she started at last to carry out Alice's injunctions with regard to letting Marguerite know that lunch was ready.

"If you are the waitress, you must say, 'Lunch is served, if you please,'" Alice had said to her, and Nannie had rehearsed it several times with Jack for the audience, and always with a sense of the ludicrousness of the situation showing on her face, and it showed there now when she opened the sitting-room door, and said to Marguerite, "Lunch is served, if you please," and then waited a moment, expecting to be introduced, for, although she was acting the part of a servant, she had no thought of being really mistaken for one.

With all his admiration for Marguerite, whose style of beauty was so different, Harry had never seen anything so pretty in his life as this little girl who, he supposed, was a maid.

"By Jove," he said involuntarily, as he rose to his feet, and half bowed to Nannie, who still stood waiting.

Mrs. Bellamy, too, who had not expected to find a servant of any kind, was surprised, while Lucy gave vent to a low exclamation, and put her hand over the mouth of Grip, who, at the sight of another stranger, began to bark again. Marguerite knew that Nannie was lovely, but she had never seemed to her just as she did now, with a look on her face which reminded her of the halo seen about Murillo's

Madonnas in the galleries abroad. The cap was a great surprise, and in her bewilderment she never thought of introducing Nannie, who, she had not supposed, could be taken for other than what she was. As the guests did not at once respond to her summons, Nannie repeated it, and this time there was a smile around her mouth as she said. "Lunch is served, if you please."

Then Marguerite arose and asked her visitors to walk into the dining-room, but Lucy held back, and said, "I am very sorry to trouble you, Marguerite, but you will either have to shut up that monster of a cat, or I shall be obliged to keep Grip in my lap during the lunch. I would not have him scratched again for a great deal."

"Certainly," Marguerite replied. "Excuse me a moment," and she followed Nannie to the kitchen, where, outside the door, the offending Tom, who had come down from his perch in the maple tree, was crunching a chicken bone which had been given him by Jack as a reward of merit for his bravery.

From a distance Jack had witnessed the battle between the dog and the cat, and had danced what he called a pigeon wing in token of his championship for Tom, whom he at first refused to shut up. But Marguerite's entreaties prevailed, together with those of Nannie, who said, "You can put him in the smoke-house; it will only be for a little while, and I will give you a lot of chicken and things for him. Poor old Tom," and she glanced compassionately at the cat, who, with that wonderful sagacity which animals sometimes show when danger threatens them, seemed to understand the conversation, and when Jack came

near him he started on a swift gallop in the direction of the orchard. Then there ensued a wild chase around the barn, the out buildings and the well, Tom with his tail high in the air, and Jack, with Sally Marsh's apron flopping around his feet and nearly throwing him down. The animal was captured at last and safe in the smoke-house, and then Marguerite returned to her guests, whom she invited into the dining-room, from which the sunshine had been excluded, and which to Lucy and Harry looked very cool and inviting, with the table nicely laid and the bowl of roses in the centre. Mrs. Bellamy, on the contrary, who was resolved to see the worst side and make the most of it, thought only of the coarse cloth and the stone china dishes and the thick goblets, as she seated herself and took from Nannie the cup of steaming bouillon which Lucy declared the most delicious she had ever tasted. If anything disgusted Mrs. Bellamy more than another it was coarse linen and stone china and thick glass ware, but her disgust did not prevent her doing justice to the lunch, for it was a great success, and Nannie proved the nicest kind of a waitress, although a little too sociable for etiquette.

Among her many other instructions, Alice had forgotten to tell her that she was not to talk, and as she was very hospitable and anxious to please, she insisted that Mrs. Bellamy should take a second cup of bouillon, telling her there was plenty of it, and it wouldn't hurt her in the least. Lucy was convulsed with laughter at the look of dismay on her cousin's face, but Harry thought of nothing but Nannie. A pretty face was an object of interest to

him, whether it belonged to a princess or a peasant, and the moment Nannie left the room he exclaimed:

"Oh, Madge! Where did you get such a handsome waitress?" while Lucy, too, chimed in, "She is lovely, with all that hair, which might make her fortune. I didn't know that there were such servants to be had in the country. Where did you find her? I wish I had just such a person for my maid."

"By Jove, I wish you had, for then I could see her every day," Harry said, while his mother frowned gloomily at hearing one whom she mentally designated a dairy maid, thus complimented by her cousin and son, who raved on about Nannie, while Marguerite sat confounded, scarcely knowing what to say or how to act.

That Nannie should be mistaken for a servant was dreadful, and with her love of truth she had no wish to let the mistake pass uncorrected, although she could feel the scorn which she knew she should meet in Mrs. Bellamy's eyes when she said, "She is my sister Nannie." But she must say it, and she opened her lips to do so when Nannie appeared with the croquettes, which, if possible, were even better than the bouillon, and which Mrs. Bellamy enjoyed immensely, as she did the fresh, sweet butter, which she praised so much that Nannie said to her, "I am glad you like it. I made it myself, and as we sometimes pack butter for the Boston people, we may, perhaps, send you a jar later."

Here was familiarity with a vengeance! A girl, whom she knew now to be a dairy maid, identifying herself with the family to the extent of saying *we*, when speaking of them, and offering to send her

ıtter, was a little too much for Mrs. Bellamy's eas of propriety, and her face grew dark, as she fused the third biscuit and glanced reproachfully Marguerite, who should have taught the servant :tter manners, and whose cheeks were scarlet with ıagrin and embarrassment. Three times she tempted to explain, and every time she did so, mething seemed to prevent, until at last she could ›t do it. But her conscience smote her fearfully hen Harry again spoke of Nannie as the waitress, hile Mrs. Bellamy said, rather loftily, "Yes, she ›es very well, but if I were you, Marguerite, I ould teach her some things of which she is evi-:ntly ignorant."

Marguerite would have explained then, if Nannie ıd not come in at the moment with her coffee and ackberries and cream, and so another opportunity as lost, while she thought to herself, "I can't tell ıem now, and it doesn't matter. They will never ›me here again, and Nannie will never know." ut the acted lie troubled her greatly, and she :came so constrained in manner and absent-inded, and answered their questions so at random, ıat for the first time in his life Harry found her a ttle dull and uninteresting.

"It is the confounded country that ails her," he ıought, "and I don't blame her a bit. Once get :r away and she'll be all right again."

It was impossible for him to see her alone for a oment, as she gave him no chance, but he man-ged occasionally to lay his hand upon her shoulder y way of a caress, and his eyes, when she met them, ›ld her that his love had not abated a whit. After

lunch was over and they returned to the sitting-room, the conversation was not very hilarious, although Lucy, who saw that something was amiss with Marguerite, did her best to talk and introduce topics which she thought would be agreeable. The beauty of the country was descanted upon, Mrs Rathburn's health was inquired for, Saratoga was talked about and the gay times they expected to have there. Mrs. Catheron was spoken of, and wonder expressed by Mrs. Bellamy because she had buried herself where she could, of course, have no society. But everything fell flat, until even Harry became more silent than usual and kept his eyes fixed upon the sitting-room door, as if hoping to see the dairy maid again.

Meanwhile Nannie was gathering up the dishes and talking to Jack, who, having expected to feast himself upon the good things left, was looking rather ruefully at the remains of the lunch.

"Well, I'll be darned," he said, "if they didn't eat everything up slick and clean. Only one nut-cake and a half left! Some of them must have taken three; and every blackberry gone, and all the cream! Why, there is hardly anything left for Tom, who is mewing and scratching away in the smoke-house. I mean to let him out."

"No, no, Jack," Nannie said. "Wait a little while. I heard Mrs. Bellamy say that the coachman was to come for them at half-past three and take them to drive. It is nearly that now. I did want to be through in time to go in and get acquainted, and I thought, perhaps, Marguerite would introduce me, but I guess she forgot it, and she seemed queer all

the time. Perhaps she is afraid of Mrs. Bellamy. I should be, she's such a grand looking woman, with big diamonds in her ears. They must have cost as much as a hundred dollars. I shouldn't want her for my mother-in-law. She is so proud and distant, and gave me such a look when I offered to send her some butter. Harry is splendid," she continued, as she passed the towel to Jack, who was to wipe the dishes for her.

Nannie had been greatly impressed with Harry, whom she thought very handsome, though rather too boyish and young-looking for Marguerite, whom Dr. Catheron would suit better. But as he was to be her brother-in-law, she would be loyal to him. She had never believed Marguerite's assertion that because of her changed position the marriage would not take place, and now that Mrs. Bellamy had of her own accord come to visit them, and brought her son with her, she was sure that all would be right, and was very anxious to talk with Harry and let him know that she was pleased with him.

"And I do believe he liked me, too, he looked at me in such a way," she thought, and then continued aloud to Jack, "There was something real kind of brotherly in his eyes, as they followed me around the table, and I know he wanted to speak to me."

"Do you think he is handsomer than Dr. Catheron?" Jack asked, and Nannie replied, "Why, no. Handsome is not exactly the word for either. Dr. Catheron looks more like—well, more like a man, while Harry's face is so fair and smooth, and his hair so light, that he seems more like a woman—

more like me, you know, and I guess I should rather have him than Dr. Catheron."

"Wouldn't it be jolly if you should cut Marguerite out; you say he looked at you so brotherly; and what a funny couple you would make. Something like Tom Thumb and a giant," Jack said, adding, before Nannie had time to answer him, "Hallo, the carriage has come, and there is father just in time to see 'em."

Looking from the window, Nannie saw her father coming up the lane, with a load of wood, which he was bringing to the rear of the house. Marguerite saw him, too, and her cheeks grew crimson, for Mrs. Bellamy and Lucy and Harry were all three standing by her in the yard near a clematis which they had stopped to examine on their way to the carriage, and she knew that they, too, saw the bent man in the blue cotton shirt, who drove his cart around the house, and that they, as well as herself, heard Jack's shrill voice, saying to him, "I'm glad you've come in time to see Margret's beau; he's an awful dude, and Nan and I have had such fun. I fried the thing-em-bobs and wiped the dishes, while Nan waited on the table with a puckered piece on her head."

Mrs. Bellamy and Lucy and Harry were too well bred to give any sign of what they had heard, and soon hurried away, leaving Marguerite by the gate with a ringing in her ears and a feeling that she must cry outright with mortification and contempt for herself.

"This has been the most wretched day of my life, for I've been untrue to Nannie, and ashamed of my

wn people," she thought, as she turned towards ıe house, and saw Nannie standing in the door ırtesying to the departing guests, while Harry 'as lifting his hat to her.

" Oh, Marguerite, isn't he nice, and aren't you glad ou have seen him, and did I wait on the table ght?" Nannie asked; but Marguerite could not nswer at once, and only wound her arm around the eck of the little girl, whom she kissed passionately, nd to whom she said at last, "Yes, Nannie, you id admirably, and everything was such a surprise. wish I were half as good as you, but I am not. 'm so wicked and hard, and my head aches so that must go up stairs at once."

Nannie's innocent, wondering eyes were a ter- ible reproach to Marguerite, who wanted to get way from them, and taking refuge in a headache, he went to her room and did not come down again ıat night, although about sunset she heard Dr. 'atheron's voice in the yard talking to Nannie, and ɔoking from the window saw him, as she had often one, smoothing the golden curls on which the retty cap was still lying.

" Yes, he cares for Nannie, and I am glad of it. ihe deserves the best there is to give her, while I m a miserable hypocrite," she thought, as she eviewed the incidents of the day, which, in her tate of mind, magnified themselves tenfold.

* * * * * * *

As the carriage drove away from the farm-house, he occupants naturally began to talk, that is Mrs. 3ellamy and Lucy did, the former asking the latter

if she supposed that very common looking man in the blue shirt was Marguerite's father, and if she had heard what the boy said to him.

"Yes, I heard some of it," Lucy answered, "and I was very sorry for Marguerite. She is not to blame for the accident of her birth; no one is, and the change must be very hard for her. How beautiful she is, and how nicely the lunch was served."

"I'm glad you liked it," Mrs. Bellamy answered, elevating her chin with a contemptuous sniff, while Harry could have hugged his cousin for her defense of Marguerite.

The visit on the whole had been a disappointment to him. He had not seen as much of Marguerite as he had hoped to do, nor had she seemed quite the same; "but how could she?" he asked himself, "with everything so different. I mean to go down there to-morrow and cheer her up," and then his thoughts turned upon Nannie, of whom he at last spoke to Lucy, saying he didn't know before that common people could look as she did, "not a bit like a servant, you know, but more like something, —well, something ethereal with wings, when she first presented herself at the door."

"Don't be foolish over a country girl. You'll be falling in love with her next," Mrs. Bellamy said pettishly, while Lucy, who had her own suspicions with regard to Nannie, smiled quietly and said nothing.

Harry was greatly interested in Nannie, and that night, in his dreams, his thoughts were very much mixed up with eyes of brown and eyes of blue, and when he awoke next morning it was Nannie who

first came into his mind, and whose hair seemed dancing before him just as the sunlight was dancing on the wall.

CHAPTER XXX.

MARGUERITE'S REMORSE.

It was terrible for a few hours, and when she thought of all Nannie's sweetness and goodness and efforts to please, and how she had recompensed her by allowing her to pass for a servant, she buried her face among the pillows and sobbed bitterly.

"It was surprise which kept me silent at first," she said, "but afterwards it was shame of my darling sister, whose hands I am not worthy to touch, and in whose eyes I can never look again until I have made amends and confessed myself a hypocrite. For it was a lie to hear them talk of her as they did and not speak, and cowardly not to say to Mrs. Bellamy, 'that is my father,' when I saw her looking so scornfully at the poor old tired man. But I'll do it yet, and to-morrow they shall know everything."

Lighting a lamp and opening her writing-desk, Marguerite began a letter to Harry, which read as follows:

"DEAR HARRY:

"I cannot sleep until I tell you how proud and wicked I have been to-day,—wicked in acting a lie, if I did not exactly speak it, and proud because after the first surprise was over I was half ashamed to tell your mother that the girl who waited upon us was my own sister. Nannie, whom in spite

of my treachery I love so much that I would almost give my life for her; and yet, in a way, I denied her. We have no servant, neither waitress nor cook. Poor people like us seldom have. Nannie prepared the lunch herself and did everything. The old-fashioned man, whom you saw in the lane, was my father, and the boy, whose voice you heard telling him what he had done in the kitchen, was Jack, my brother; and now you have the whole pitiful story and know just what I am. But I am repenting bitterly, and shall never rest until you have this letter, which must put an end to everything between us, even if it had not been ended before. I have told you many times that it was impossible for us to be married, and you must understand it now. You have been to my home; you have seen my people, and you know how different they are from yourself. You could never assimilate with them, although for my sake you might try to do so, but you would soon grow tired and wish to separate me from them, and that could never be. I think I know your mother's motive in bringing you here, and if I am right, she must have achieved her object, and so, dear Harry, listen to her and try to forget me. I believe you have loved me, and the memory of your love will sometimes make me glad when I am most lonely and desolate. We shall always be friends, and when I hear, as I shall, that you are married to some good girl who is your equal, as the world goes, I shall be the first to congratulate you. Don't come here again, please; and don't write to me, but consider this final, as I mean it to be.

"Your sincere friend,

"MARGUERITE."

P. S. You can show this letter to your mother, if you like. I wish her and Miss Lucy to know all about it, and who the girl is whom they thought a servant."

Marguerite felt better after she had finished and irected the letter, but it was hours before she fell sleep, and when she awoke next morning, it was ith a headache so severe that she could scarcely ft her head from the pillow. To rise was impossi- e, and Nannie carried up her breakfast, arranged n a tray with one of the roses from the Pines in glass. But Marguerite was too ill to eat, and so annie took the tray away; and then going back to r sister, bathed her hot head and brushed her ir, while every touch of her fingers seemed like a ab to Marguerite in her state of mind.

"Is there anything more I can do for you?" Nan- e asked, and Marguerite replied, "No,—or, yes, ere's a letter on the table for Harry, which I very uch wish him to have this morning, as his mother id they might possibly leave to-night. Do you ink Jack will carry it to him? It must go. I all never rest until it does."

"Of course he will," Nannie said, taking up the ter, and wondering why Marguerite seemed so cited.

She found her father in the back-yard, where she d seen Jack half an hour before, but on inquiring him she was told he had just started for Mill- le with Dr. Catheron.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," she said. "Here's a letter ich Marguerite wants taken to Mr. Bellamy. e has a dreadful headache, and is very anxious ut it. What shall I do?"

"I guess it will keep," Mr. Rathburn answered ifferently, but Nannie didn't think so.

t was a love-letter, of course, and, as such, very

important, and Harry ought to have it, for Marguerite had said she should never rest until he did. After thinking a moment, during which time she caught sight of Pedler feeding in the orchard near Brindle, she exclaimed, "I'll take it myself on Pedler if you will bring him round."

"But where's your side saddle?" Mr. Rathburn asked. "You don't want to go to the Mountain House on a man's saddle."

"Why not?" Nannie rejoined. "Nobody will know the difference, and if they do, I don't care. Bring Pedler up, please, and look in upon mother while I am gone. I shall not be gone long."

Nannie, who had ridden oftener on a man's saddle than on a side saddle, was soon ready, and with a blue flannel cape on her shoulders, a white sun-bonnet on her head, her long hair streaming over her cape, and the letter in her pocket, was riding toward the Mountain House as fast as Pedler could take her. Mrs. Bellamy had intended leaving that afternoon for Saratoga, but Harry declared that he wouldn't go. He liked it where they were, he said, and he meant to stay a day or two. He didn't add that he intended going over to see Marguerite, although such was his intention, and he was standing on the piazza and wondering if it were too early to start, when he caught sight of Pedler galloping up the avenue with Nannie on his back, her hair and cape and sun-bonnet all floating in the wind, for the latter had fallen off, and her curls were blowing about her flushed and eager face as she came up.

"By George," Harry said, "there she is. That's the maid who stared at me so. What a pretty pic-

ture she makes on that old cob with that queer rig. I wonder what she wants. I do believe she is going to speak to me."

And in fact Nannie was motioning to him with one hand, while with the other she shook the bridle around Pedler's head in order to accelerate his speed. Going down the steps and advancing towards her, Harry bade her good-morning, and then, as she halted, said to her, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

Nannie's reply was to take from her pocket the letter, which she passed to him, saying: "Marguerite sent you this, and as Jack was gone, I brought it myself, she seemed so anxious about it. She has a very bad headache to-day."

"Marguerite," Harry repeated, taking the letter and beginning to tear open the envelope. "You mean Miss Rathburn, your mistress."

It was Nannie's turn to look puzzled now. "Miss Rathburn my mistress?" she rejoined. "She is not my mistress, but she *is* Miss Rathburn, my sister, you know, and I am Nannie."

"Your sister!" Harry exclaimed. "By Jove, that was an awful blunder. I thought you were—"

Here he stopped suddenly, while Nannie said, "You thought I was what?"

Her blue eyes were upon him, compelling him to speak the truth, and in a stammering, hesitating way he began: "It was horribly stupid in us, but—you see—we did— Well, the fact is, as you waited on the table, we thought you were the waitress."

"You thought I was the waitress," Nannie repeated, without any resentment in her voice.

"Well, so I was for the time being, but I am really Nannie Rathburn, Marguerite's sister. I wish you would read her letter, as it may require an answer, and I'm in a great hurry."

She had leaped from Pedler's back as she talked, and with her bridle on her arm was tying on her sunbonnet, while Harry looked at her, too much amazed to speak at once.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Nannie," he said at last. "I ought to have known better. You are not at all like a waitress. You are like—" Here he checked himself, stopped by something in the expression of Nannie's face, which warned him that compliments, which he might ordinarily pay to girls in her station, would not be acceptable to her.

"Will you read the letter, please?" she continued, as she saw his eyes fixed upon her, rather than upon the note he held in his hand, and then she added, "Now I think of it, I want to ask the housekeeper for the money she owes us for eggs, and if we shall send her some more, and as Pedler is afraid of that barrel around by the kitchen door, will you hold him while I go in to see her, and don't let him go off on to the grass, as he'll try to do, for he will tear the turf up with his feet."

It was a novel position in which Harry Bellamy found himself, holding an old farm horse, who, attracted by the fresh green sward, made every possible effort to reach it, and it required all his strength to hold him back, as he read Marguerite's letter, which did not affect him quite as it would have done if Nannie had not already told him who she was.

"Madge is a girl in a thousand," ne said, as he finished the letter, "and I think more of her than ever, but she needn't cudgel herself like this. I dare say she *was* a little ashamed of the old gentleman and the boy, but Nannie—I can't imagine anybody being ashamed of her. Come off of that!" and he gave a jerk to the bridle, for Pedler, having had a taste of the grass, was not willing to abandon it, and had planted himself in the centre of one of the freshest plots, taking Harry with him.

It was hard work pulling him back, but the young man succeeded at last, and brought him up to the steps, where he was reading Marguerite's letter a second time when his mother appeared in the doorway. She was going for a walk up the mountain road, where she had been told there was a very pretty waterfall, and thus it chanced that she came upon Harry, holding fast to Pedler, who, in spite of all his efforts was dragging him step by step toward the grass in the distance. Mrs. Bellamy seldom used slang, which she abhorred, but it came to her involuntarily now, and she exclaimed, "Good heavens, Harry; what are you doing? And whose horse is that you are holding?"

There was a comical look on Harry's face as he replied, "I wouldn't swear, mother, if I were you; I am only holding Miss Rathburn's horse while she interviews the housekeeper about some eggs, or cheese, or something, deuced if I know what. I wish she would hurry up, the brute is getting unmanageable. I shouldn't suppose he had ever seen any grass before in his life."

Harry said all this between the jerks which Ped-

ler gave him, as he moved further down the avenue, while Mrs. Bellamy listened in amazement.

"Miss Rathburn!" she repeated, thinking only of Marguerite. "Miss Rathburn ride that animal on a man's saddle, and gone to interview the housekeeper about eggs and cheese? What do you mean?"

Before Harry could answer Nannie came running towards him, with a basket on her arm and distress in her voice as she said, "I didn't mean to stay so long, but Mrs. Brown and I disagreed about the number of eggs she owed us for, and she had to look it up. I hope Pedler hasn't troubled you much, he is so crazy to get at the grass, when he sees it."

"He hasn't troubled me in the least, and I rather enjoy holding him," Harry replied, feeling that he could have told a bigger lie than that, under the fire of Nannie's eyes, which looked up so confidingly at him, as she handed him the basket preparatory to mounting the horse.

"I am taking it home for the eggs which we have saved for the hotel," she explained, referring to the basket, just as she caught sight of Mrs. Bellamy, to whom she bade a cheery "Good morning."

But her salutation was only returned by a nod and the elevating of the lady's chin in the air, her usual mode of expressing disapprobation. What did Harry mean by calling this dairy-maid Miss Rathburn? she asked herself, just as the young man turned to her and said, "Mother, this is Miss Nannie Rathburn, Marguerite's sister. We saw her yesterday, you remember."

Mrs. Bellamy was now too much astonished to speak, and only answered with a freezing bow, which, however, was lost on Nannie, whom Harry had seated on Pedler's back as easily as if she had been a child.

"How handsome he is, and how kind he looks at me," Nannie thought, as she took the basket from him, and gathered up the reins, and then, remembering that he had given her no message for Marguerite, she said very earnestly, "Is there no answer to the letter? Aren't you going to send some word, and Marguerite's head aching so hard?"

"Why, yes," Harry replied. "I ought to. I was coming over this afternoon, if you think she would be able to see me, but I think I had better write a few lines."

He took a visiting card from his pocket and wrote hastily:

DEAR MADGE,

"You are altogether too morbid about a mistake which was natural enough, but you are a noble girl explain it as you have, and I love you all the more for it. I shall see you some time to-day. Nannie is lovely.

"Yours truly, HARRY."

He glanced once or twice at the expression, "Nannie is lovely," wondering if he ought to scratch it out, or take the chance of Nannie's reading it, as she probably would; but one look at the steadfast eyes convinced him that an open letter to her was as sacred as a sealed one, and he handed her the card, which she put into her pocket, and was soon gallop-

ing down the avenue, while he stood looking after her, with a strange sensation stirring at his heart which he could not define.

"By Jove," he said to himself, "that girl is about the prettiest and most old-fashioned little creature I ever saw," and then he walked back to where his mother was standing, with an expression on her face which boded no good to him.

"What does this mean?" she said; "and why did Marguerite pass her sister off on us as a waitress, when she makes such a point of being so very conscientious?"

Harry had not intended showing the letter to his mother, although Marguerite had told him to do so. Now, however, he changed his mind, and passing it to her, bade her read it, and see what a noble girl Marguerite was, and as Mrs. Bellamy read it, she was conscious of a feeling of great respect for Marguerite, towards whom, however, she did not soften. How could she, when she remembered the farmhouse and its accessories, the man in the lane, and the boy who had called Harry a dude. It was all very dreadful, but she was prevented from saying so by the appearance of Lucy, who came out with Grip under her arm and a novel in her hand, and to whom Mrs. Bellamy explained the situation, asking if she were not surprised.

"Not at all," Lucy answered, seating herself in the easiest chair she could find. "I suspected as much before we left the house, and I think little Nannie a darling. I'd like to see her again."

"And, by George, you shall," Harry said eagerly.

"We'll go there this afternoon. It will be perfectly proper to call after the lunch, you know."

Mrs. Bellamy's chin was very high in the air by this time, for Lucy, whom she depended upon as an ally, had gone over to the enemy, while Harry had taken the bits in his teeth, and she could do nothing with him. Meanwhile Nannie was riding towards home, where she went at once to Marguerite, who looked up eagerly and asked, "Did Jack take it?"

"No," Nannie replied, "Jack has gone to Millville with Dr. Catheron, and I took it myself."

"You took it!" Marguerite repeated, lifting her flushed face from the pillow and feeling that this was the last drop in the bitter cup.

"Why, yes," Nannie answered. "I knew you wanted it to go very badly, and I wanted to see Mrs. Brown about the eggs for which she has owed us so long, and so I went with it. Harry was so nice, and held Pedler while I was in the kitchen, and lifted me on his back before I knew what he was going to do, and fixed my foot into the stirrup, and never seemed to mind my old shoes a bit, and looked at me as if he really liked me. I think he is splendid." Then, remembering the card, she gave it to Marguerite, and continued, "But wasn't it funny that they thought I was the hired girl. I guess it was the cap; and you ought to have seen the look on Harry's face when I told him who I was."

Marguerite had read the words on the card by this time, and motioning Nannie to sit down beside her, said to her, "I knew they thought you were a servant, and I let it pass and so acted a lie, and

hoped they would not see father or Jack, because I knew how Mrs. Bellamy would scorn them, and that is why my head is aching so hard. But I confessed it all in the letter which you carried to Harry, and told him just how proud and wicked I was. Can you forgive me, Nannie? I can hardly forgive myself for having been so unjust to you."

Nannie was looking fixedly at her, with an expression on her face which Marguerite could not fathom, for in truth, Nannie was a little hurt that Marguerite had allowed the mistake to pass uncorrected, or had felt ashamed of her father and Jack. But the feeling of resentment soon passed away, and she said, "I think I did feel stirred up just for a minute, because I didn't quite expect it from you, but it's all gone now, and I'm glad you wrote to Harry and told him the truth. I couldn't live with a lie on my conscience, and I suppose that in a way it was a lie. But now try to sleep, for Harry is coming this afternoon; he told me so, and I shall make him stay to tea and shall sit at the table this time instead of waiting upon it, and will have father and Jack there, too. Then there will be no more shame or hiding on their account. Father is a very respectable man, who belongs to the church, and Jack is the dearest boy in the world, even if he sometimes does things I do not like. Dr. Catheron never seems to mind their ways, and he is as high up as the Bellamys, isn't he?"

Nannie was getting warm in her defense of her father and Jack, but checked herself when she saw how distressed Marguerite looked, and how sorry she seemed.

"There, there, don't think about it any more," she continued, "I don't care about it now, and never shall any more."

And so there was peace between the sisters, and while Marguerite tried to sleep, Nannie went to her work and was soon singing as blithe as a bee, with anticipations of the afternoon, when Harry Bellamy would come again.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HARRY RUNS HIMSELF.

When she awoke Marguerite's head was so much better that she went down to dinner, and after it was over and she had seen her mother, she went out and sat under the maple tree, where, with Tom curled up on the skirt of her white dress and her big hat pulled over her face, she was falling asleep a second time when Harry came, vaulting over the fence across the road, and was soon beside her.

"Why, Madge, you look as if you had been sick a month! Is your head so bad?" he began, as he took one of her hands. "Lucy is coming by and by in the cart and wanted me to drive her; but I couldn't wait, I was so anxious to see you alone and tell you it is nonsense for you to talk of our engagement being ended. What do you suppose I care about your father, or your brother, or anything else, when I can have you and Nannie. Isn't she

pretty, though? She shall live with us when we have a house of our own. And there's the rub; —about the house, I mean. As you seem to know how mother feels, I don't mind letting you know that we had a jolly row this morning, and she said—"

Here he hesitated, until Marguerite asked, "What did she say?" so decidedly, that he continued, "Well, she said if I married a poor girl with no family she should stop my yearly allowance. As I mean to marry a poor girl I have decided to run myself hereafter, and get into some business, if I can, and I don't want you to discourage me by saying you will not marry me."

And then there followed a long discussion, at the close of which Marguerite had promised that if, at the end of a year, Harry still wished her to be his wife, and had any means of supporting her independent of his mother, she would marry him. He did not despise her family as she had thought he would, and this made her feel very kindly disposed towards him, and more ready to enter into the new compact, which was conditional. Meanwhile he could write to her and visit her occasionally, but was not to be very lover-like or demonstrative, especially before people. "Just good friends, that was all."

"All right," Harry said, very cheerfully, "I am glad you are sensible, for if you cast me off I shall certainly go to the dogs,—or Nannie," he added, as he caught sight of a gleam of golden hair in the kitchen, where Nannie was finishing the week's ironing.

"Better go to Nannie," Marguerite said laughingly, just as down the hill in one direction the dog-cart from the Mountain House came rattling, with Lucy Grady in it, while up a hill in another direction Dr. Catheron came galloping on Nero.

He had been at the house early that morning and heard from Nannie of Marguerite's headache, and now, seeing her in the yard, stopped to ask how she was, and to pay his respects to Harry, whom he had not seen for some time, and at whom he looked curiously as if taking his measure, both mental and moral. They were a great contrast, as they stood side by side, both cultured and refined and good-looking, and yet so different from each other. In Dr. Catheron a stranger would recognize at once a strength of character and a depth of sound common sense which the more boyish Harry seemed to lack, but for which he made amends in extreme good humor, and a heartiness of manner which some would prefer to common sense and strength of character. A woman might be afraid to displease Dr. Catheron, and would scarcely try to oppose him when his mind was made up to what he felt to be right, but no one would ever dream of fearing Harry, or hesitate to oppose him, he was usually so easily influenced. Both would make the kindest of husbands, but where the doctor would be decided and firm, Harry would be easy and indifferent, turning most things into a joke, and bent upon what he called a good time.

And he was out for one this afternoon and had had it thus far alone with Marguerite. But when the doctor and Lucy Grady joined them he began

to feel bored, especially as the conversation soon turned upon books, for which he did not particularly care unless it were poetry, or some novel which made his hair stand on end. Lucy, who had left her "bunch of softness" at home, was nevertheless at first growled at by Tom, as something pertaining to the enemy, but as she was fond of pets of all kinds she soon made friends with him, and taking him in her lap began to discuss Tolstoi's last book, which the doctor and Marguerite had read, and which she was reading in French. Harry hated Tolstoi, and, after standing a few minutes with nothing to say, excused himself and started for the kitchen, where he had seen the top of Nannie's head, and where he found her bending over the ironing table, with her hair twisted under a net and her face very red with heat.

"Oh, Mr. Bellamy, is that you? Good afternoon," she said. "I thought I heard your voice in the yard; and Dr. Catheron is there, I see, and Miss Grady, and I am glad, because they will cheer Marguerite up, and she is so depressed with her headache, and that other thing, you know. I'd like to go out there and see Miss Grady, but I can't, I am so behind with the ironing. I would ask you to come in, but it is so hot you couldn't stand it, so if you stay here, you'd better sit down outside the door where it is cool," and exchanging one iron for another she put her finger first to her lips and then to the iron, which gave the desired hiss; then she returned to the table, and began to move it rapidly over the coarse towels and napkins piled in the basket at her side.

Harry hesitated a moment, for he liked to be comfortable, and as he expressed it to himself, "it was hot as blazes in the kitchen." But Nannie's face conquered him.

"If you can stand it, I think I can," he said, stepping inside, and taking a chair near the door. Then, fanning himself with the big palm-leaf Nannie gave him, he went on: "I believe I'd rather sit here, hot as it is, and talk with you than to stay out there and hear them discuss such stupid old muffs as Tolstoi. Do you like him?"

Nannie had never heard of him, and said so promptly.

"I'm glad of it," Harry returned. "I don't like bookish women, except Marguerite, of course. Lucy isn't exactly what you would call bookish. She reads too many novels for that, but she does know a lot about theosophy and occultism, and clairvoyance, or thinks she does, and pretty soon they will plunge into those subjects, with Christian science and the mind cure, and the Lord only knows what. I say, Nannie,—you'll let me call you that, won't you? And you must call me Harry. That was an awful blunder about you, and I am so sorry. I hope you don't mind."

"Not a bit," Nannie answered, changing her iron again, and making it hiss as before, a process which Harry didn't quite understand. "Not a bit now, though it hurt at first when Marguerite told me she was ashamed of father and Jack. She told you in the letter, she said, and I am glad. She couldn't go on acting a lie any more than I could. She's a splendid girl."

"That's so," Harry assented, drawing a little nearer to Nannie, "but I think it was very foolish in her to suppose I would go back on her because of her poverty or family."

"It would be mighty mean in you if you did,—and mean in her to go back on you, and I told her so," and Nannie's iron came down with a whack on one of her father's blue socks which she was attacking with great vigor.

"Thank you," Harry said, and then very briefly he told her the arrangement which had been made between himself and Marguerite, and how they were to wait a year, and if, at the end of that time, he loved her as well as he did now, as of course he should, and had found something to do by which he could support her, she would marry him. "And there's the bother," he said. "What the deuce can I find to do? Do you know?"

"I'm sure I don't," Nannie replied. "What do you do now? What *is* your business?"

Harry hesitated a moment, and then replied, "I'm afraid I haven't any."

"Haven't any business!" and setting her iron upon the table, Nannie turned and faced him. "A man, and haven't any business! How do you pass your time?"

"Well, I'll tell you," Harry replied. "It's an awful bore to get through the day sometimes,—in America, I mean; in Europe it is well enough, because there is always something to see, a picture gallery, or a ruin, or a cathedral; but in New York it is different, and I don't get up till ten or eleven o'clock."

"Don't get up till ten or eleven o'clock!" and Nannie looked with great disgust in her face at the young giant, who continued, "No, I don't, and after I am up, I take my breakfast or lunch, just as it happens,—read the papers, go on to the street, and drive to the Park, and see the same tiresome faces day after day; then I dine, either at home or at a friend's house, or the club, and after that the theatre, or the opera, or a concert, followed by an ice or something at Delmonico's, or the Brunswick, so that it is frequently one o'clock, or later, before I get to bed. What do you think of it?"

"Think of it!" Nannie repeated, sitting down in a chair, and wiping the sweat from her face with her apron. "I think it the greatest piece of shiftlessness and laziness that I ever heard of for a big man like you to lead a life like that, and if I were Marguerite, I would never marry you until you had reformed and found something to do besides going to bed at one o'clock in the morning, and lying until noon. I'm ashamed of you, and disappointed in you, too;" and in fact Harry had never been half as ashamed of himself as he was in the presence of this girl, who, with the marks of toil upon her hands, which were again grasping the flat-iron, was lecturing him so soundly.

He didn't want her to be disappointed in him, and asked very earnestly, "But, Nannie, what can I do? Can you think of anything. I have some lots in Tacoma and Seattle which may rise in the market and make me rich, and I have a thousand dollars a year of my own, independent of mother, who gives

me as much more, but who will stop it, if I marry a poor girl."

"You have a thousand dollars a year!" Nannie exclaimed, turning again to look at him, while he drew his chair so near to the table that his elbow now rested upon it. "Why, I call that rich, and I should say that with 'prudency and economy' as old Sally Marsh says, you and Marguerite could live handsomely upon that. I could, I know."

"Pray tell me how," Harry said, beginning to feel a good deal comforted at the idea that with "prudency and economy" he might manage to live on a thousand dollars a year, and not have to work either.

And so, while outside under the shadow of the maple tree Marguerite and Lucy Grady and Dr. Catheron discussed Tolstoi and theosophy and occultism and clairvoyance and Christian science, Harry and Nannie in the hot kitchen discussed the ways and means by which a thousand dollars a year could be made to go the farthest and buy all the luxuries to which Harry had been accustomed.

"By Jove, Nannie, you'll have to live with us," Harry said, "and keep the thing running!" Then suddenly changing the conversation, as one of Nannie's curls found its way out of its confinement and fell upon her neck, he asked, "Why is your hair all twisted up in that thing? Why don't you let it down just as it was this morning?"

"It gets in my way and it's cooler as it is," Nannie replied, and then, knowing that this was not quite all the truth, and feeling by this time pretty well acquainted with the young man, who in the course

of their confidential conversation, had called her a *brick*, and sundry other names equally expressive, she explained to him in part her trouble, and asked him what he thought about it.

Such a case of conscience was new to Harry, who answered very readily, "I think your digestion is out of order, and you ought to get Dr. Catheron to prescribe for you."

"But don't you think it wicked for me to curl my hair just because it makes me look better and covers up the shoulder?" Nannie asked, and Harry replied, "Wicked? Of course not. It must be a malicious kind of God who could give you curly hair and then punish you for letting it curl. I do not mean to be irreverent," he continued, as he saw the shocked look on Nannie's face at hearing the Creator thus lightly spoken of, "but I don't like to have you so morbid. Why, you will be fancying next that you must wear a coal scuttle on your head, and why not? That would mortify you, certainly."

Nannie laughed immoderately at the idea of a coal scuttle, and stopped again to rest a moment, before attacking the last articles in the basket. These proved to be a pair of pillow shams, and as she began to iron one of them, she said, "I wish Jack were here to turn the crank of the fluting iron; it is so difficult for me to hold the ruffle and flute, too, and I'm particular about them, as they belong to Marguerite's bed."

Harry was interested at once, and getting up, looked curiously at the square of tucked and ruffled linen which belonged to Marguerite's bed.

"Can't I help you?" he said. "I can at least try,

if you will show me how," and in a few moments Harry was turning the fluting iron, while Nannie held the ruffle, and praised him for his skill, their hands occasionally meeting, and their heads once bumping together, as they bent over their work.

"I'll tell you what you can do. You can open a laundry. I've heard there was a heap of money to be made in one," Nannie said.

"By Jove, I will, if you'll help me," Harry replied, blowing the blister on his thumb, which had come in too close contact with the hot iron, and wiping from his forehead the first drops of sweat which had ever been there from any work he had done.

When the ironing was finished Nannie took Harry to her mother, who received him with a set speech, which her headache had prevented her from using the previous day. Holding his hand in hers she called him first Mr. Bellamy, then Harry, then her son, and finally her boy, and told him how glad she was to see him, and how proud to welcome him to her family, which, although poor, was highly respectable. She said also that she had always discouraged Marguerite in her fanciful ideas that because of her changed circumstances the engagement must be broken, and now that she had met him and looked into his eyes, so full of honor and truth, she knew that such a thing was impossible. Harry got his hands away from her as soon as he could and stood looking helplessly around the room, wondering how much longer he should have to stay there and where Nannie was. On the bed beside Mrs. Rathburn was a book and a pencil which

she kept ready for use whenever the muse should attack her, and seeing Harry's glance fall upon them she spoke of her poetry, and asked if he had ever seen any of it.

He never had, but as his conscience was not quite as tender as either Marguerite's or Nannie's, he unhesitatingly replied that he was sure he had seen the name of *Senga* frequently, and that he should hereafter watch for it with a great deal of interest.

"I'm an awful liar," he thought to himself, as he left the room, and began to look for Nannie, who had gone up-stairs to exchange her working dress for one more presentable, and was letting her hair fall about her neck and shoulders.

"It does look better so, and I don't believe God really cares," she thought, recalling what both Harry and Jack had said about the injustice of making her hair curl and then punishing her because she curled it.

And so, with a feeling of satisfaction, and a qualm of concience, too, she descended the stairs, and went into the yard, where only Marguerite and Lucy Grady were sitting. Dr. Catheron had rather unwillingly taken his leave, having a patient among the hills miles away whom he must see that day. Every time Dr. Catheron had met Marguerite he had seen some new trait in her to admire, and this afternoon he had been particularly impressed with the amount of reading she must have done, and with the clearness with which she expressed her views on subjects ahout which so many ladies are entirely ignorant.

"She's a remarkable girl," he thought, and then

he began to speculate on what might have been, had he met her before Alice crossed his path and fettered him in such a singular way. "Poor Alice, she must never know that I haven't been true to her in thought as well as in deed," he said to himself, as he galloped away on Nero, just as Nannie came out with Harry.

Passing her arm around her sister, Marguerite said, "Miss Grady, this is Nannie, my sister, about whom such a mistake was made, you know."

When Lucy Grady roused herself to do anything, she did it heartily and gracefully, and rising to her feet, she took Nannie's hand and calling her Miss Rathburn, said, "Yes, Mrs Bellamy told me all about the blunder, for which I am sorry. I hope you will forget it."

Nannie was delighted with Miss Grady, who put her at her ease at once, and who, when an invitation to stay to tea was extended to her, accepted it immediately, sending away the boy with the dog-cart, and saying she should like nothing better than walking back to the hotel. But this Nannie would not permit, and after supper, at which both Mr. Rathburn and Jack were present, the Pie Wagon was brought out and Jack drove Lucy and Harry back to the Mountain House, where Mrs. Bellamy was sitting upon the piazza in a perturbed frame of mind. So far as her son was concerned the sceptre seemed to have passed from her grasp, and she could not control him. He had had the jolliest kind of a time, he said, and was going to stay in Rocky Point as long as he liked. And they did stay two days longer, the most of which Harry spent at the farm-house,

where he went immediately after breakfast and from which he did not return until late at night. Sometimes he talked with Marguerite of their future, which was to be one long bright holiday, with nothing to trouble them and nothing to do. But from this beatific height he usually came down with a thud when he joined Nannie, who always asked him if he had thought of anything to do, and began in her practical way to calculate how he could make his income go the farthest.

His society was very delightful to Nannie, and her work seemed much easier when he was with her, sometimes teasing her about her old-fashioned ways, and sometimes complimenting her so deftly that she hardly knew it was a compliment, and when at last he said good-bye it was hard to tell which felt the most regret, Nannie or Marguerite. It was Nannie who looked after him until he reached the top of the hill, where he stopped, and turning back saw her standing in the door, and kissing his hand to her, as a last farewell, disappeared from view, carrying with him side by side with Marguerite's brilliant beauty, a vision of the little blue-eyed girl who had crept into his heart much farther than he supposed.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SHADOW OVER THE PINES.

The remainder of the summer passed rapidly, and September spread its purple haze over the hills and mountains of Rocky Point, and when that faded away October came, and with the early frost made the trees gorgeous in their autumnal dress, and Marguerite, who had an artist's love for the beautiful in nature, thought she had never seen a fairer picture than that which met her view every morning when she looked from her window across the meadow lands to the woods, where the maples and walnuts were ablaze with crimson and gold, and where, through a clearing which had been made, she could catch a glimpse of the little river, whose waters turned the wheels of the manufactories in Millville. Marguerite was now in a more healthful state of mind, and was learning to love her country home, where she was very content and happy.

On his return from Saratoga, Harry had passed a day at the farm-house, where he spent a part of the time talking with Marguerite of their married life, which was mostly to be spent abroad, where they could live cheaper and enjoy themselves much better than in America. Then he went and talked with Nannie, who gave him a great deal of good advice, and told him she had changed her mind with regard to a thousand dollars a year going so very far.

"You can't go to Europe," she said, "nor smoke as many expensive cigars as you do now, and you

will have to do something if it is only to take a clerkship in a grocery store, or be a conductor on a street car. Either would be more respectable than lying in bed till noon." Harry promised to remember all she said, but laughed as he saw himself collecting fare in a street car, or selling sugar in a grocery store.

After his return to New York, he wrote regularly to Marguerite letters from sixteen to twenty pages long, a good deal of which Marguerite skipped, although she usually read the more important points so as to know how to answer them. There was always a message for Nannie, who, at last, when she heard that Harry was still living his old aimless life, took up her pen, and wrote him a very characteristic and grandmotherly letter, scolding him for his inefficiency, and asking what he meant by idling away his time, which was going so fast.

"Two months of your probation already gone," he said, "and you know that one of Marguerite's conditions was that you should have business of some kind, or she would not marry you, and she's not a girl to go back on her word. I told you when you were here that I'd changed my mind about the thousand dollars going so far. I had talked with Dr. Catheron about it, for I tell him everything, he seems so like a brother, and he said it wasn't a drop in the bucket for one of your expensive habits, and he knows. And if a man like him, who needn't work if he does not choose to, is busy all the time, why shouldn't you do something, and why don't you come and study medicine with him, so as to be

nearer to us. I should like it amazingly, and so would Marguerite."

"Dr. Catheron be hanged," Harry said, as he finished reading the letter, which was so like the girl who indited it. "She's always bringing up Dr. Catheron as a model. Confound the fellow."

Harry was not in the least jealous of Dr. Catheron as yet, but whenever he had met him in Rocky Point, or seen him New York, as he sometimes did, he had always been conscious of a feeling of inferiority to the man whom he recognized as his superior, and Nannie's frequent reference to him irritated him a little. He answered her letter, however, and thanked her for her advice, which, he said, he meant to profit by, adding that with the faith of Micawber he was sure something would turn up. He was constantly hearing that lands were rising in Tacoma and Seattle, where he had several lots, and when the boom came, he should sell and be a millionaire. After this there was quite a regular correspondence between him and Nannie, and although his letters to her were not as long as those to Marguerite, they usually contained from eight to ten pages, which Nannie read religiously and then put away between the leaves of her Prayer Book, until it became too bulky, and then she laid them in a box where her choicest treasures were kept. With some of her egg money she subscribed for a Tacoma paper, and sent for a map of the city, which she went over very carefully, marking with her pencil the streets on which Harry told her his lots were situated, and estimating their probable value in case of a rise. Harry was thus kept well posted with regard to

his lands, and with the comfortable thought that Nannie was looking out for his interests, he kept on the even tenor of his way, waiting for something to turn up, and only laughing when Nannie wrote to him that he would probably wait forever, unless he helped to turn it up himself.

Meanwhile there was a dark shadow brooding over the Pines, where Alice Grainger was dying. They had not thought she would last until the flowers were gone, but she lived to see the first December snow which covered the ground with a white pall, and as she one day watched the flakes falling before her window she said to Dr. Catheron, who was sitting by her, "That is my shroud, and I would rather that my grave should be covered with snow that to have the grass growing there at first, for I have a fancy that the stirring of the roots would worry and annoy me and make me nervous in my coffin. It will be such a small grave, that it will not take long to have it covered from sight and forgotten, and I've done so little good to anybody, though I have tried to give some crumbs to a few and make them happy. And, Guy, if it had not been for that terrible thing which has shadowed my life, I should have been different and you could have loved me more. I am myself now, thank God, and I know that I could never be your wife. But you have been so kind to me through it all, and when I am dead, please forget the trouble and only remember how I have loved you." Then she spoke of Marguerite and Nannie, both of whom she liked so much; "Nannie the best," she said, "for she is more like me than Marguerite, and I sometimes think it will

not be long before she will come where I am going, and then how happy we shall be talking about you and Marguerite, and everybody we loved when here."

Dr. Catheron only answered with a pressure of the wasted hand he held in his, and Alice went on; "I used to think there was something bright for Nannie in the future, but I've changed my mind. It is nothing but work, work, for her, with nobody to help her. Why doesn't Marguerite do something?"

The doctor had often asked himself this question, but would not admit it to Alice, to whom he said, "Perhaps she does."

"No, she don't," Alice answered quickly. "And Nannie is getting so pale and thin and tired. Do you think her high shoulder the result of a fall?"

"Possibly," the doctor answered, without the slightest suspicion of what was in Alice's mind.

She was naturally a meddler in other people's business, although a very good natured and well meaning one, and as, since she had known Nannie, she had been greatly interested in her, her last act was to meddle with her affairs very effectually. But she was cunning enough to keep her real intention from the doctor, who had more than once laughingly called her a tattler, and to whom she now said, after a moment's silence, "I want to see Marguerite, and I wish you would go for her to-morrow morning. I want to see Nannie, too, but Marguerite must come first."

And so the next morning, immediately after breakfast, Dr. Catheron drove to the farm-house, where he found Marguerite with one of Nannie's

aprons tied around her waist, washing the dishes in the kitchen, while Nannie sat in a chair wiping them, with her throat tied up and a flushed look on her cheeks. Nannie had always seemed to do the work so easily and quickly and without effort, that Marguerite had seldom thought to offer her services until this morning, when they were readily accepted. Nannie was ill and very weak, and had been growing more and more so every day, while, as is often the case, those who loved her most and were with her all the time, had failed to see it, as Alice had done on the occasion of her last visit to the Pines. But this morning when she complained of her head and throat, Marguerite made her sit down and took her place at the dish-pan, where Dr. Catheron found her, his eyes kindling with pleased surprise, and a look in them which she had never seen before, as he told her why he had come, but added, "You can't go, of course. Nannie needs you more than Alice."

But Nannie declared that she had only a cold and was not ill at all, and that there was nothing to do except what Jack and her father could do, and insisted so strenuously upon Marguerite's going that it was finally settled that she should go, and she was soon driving with the doctor towards the Pines, after the black horse, Nero. It was the first time she had ever driven with him, for although he had often taken Nannie, when going to visit a patient who did not live far away, he had never invited her, and since Harry's visit to the farm-house, and the story which Nannie, who, like Alice, was something of a tattler, had told him of the year's

probation, there had been in his manner towards her an air of restraint, as if he were repressing his real feelings and keeping something back. They were soon at the Pines, where Marguerite was taken at once to Alice, who had grown alarmingly worse during the doctor's absence, and was lying with her eyes closed, and a look on her face such as Marguerite had seen on Mrs. James Rathburn's a few hours before she died.

"Allie," she said very softly, for during the last two months she had been often at the Pines and had become so familiar with Alice as to call her by her pet name, "Allie," she said, again, and the sick girl opened her eyes, which sparkled with delight when they saw Marguerite bending over her. "Oh, Marguerite," she said, "I am so glad you have come. Sit down beside me, and put your hand upon my forehead. It will give me strength to last a little longer perhaps, and I have so much to say to everybody. I have asked mother to keep them all out of the room while I talked first with you."

Sitting down beside her, Marguerite laid her hand on Alice's forehead, and said, "What do you wish to say to me, Allie?"

"Oh, so much," Alice answered, "if my brain will only keep straight. It isn't always clear, you know, perhaps. Have you ever suspected anything?"

"Nothing," Marguerite answered, a vague suspicion of the truth stealing over her.

"I may tell you before I get through," Alice said, "or I may manifest it in some way, but now I know what I am talking about. I am going to die,

—going away from the beautiful world which I love so much, and out of Guy's life, which is worse than all, although I doubt if he ever loved me as I do him. He will never forget me, but he will soon learn to live without me, and somebody else will take my place. Once I had a crazy notion that it would be Nannie. That was before I knew you, and when my brain was in a whirl. I think I have told you something of this before, haven't I? Things go from me, and when I try to bring them back, my head buzzes as if there was a host of English sparrows in it. It is beginning to buzz now, but I guess I can go on to the end, if you keep your hand tight on my forehead. It is of Nannie I am going to talk. Dear Nannie, for whom, if she should live, I hope there is something better in store than what she has now. Work, work, all the time, until her poor body aches in every bone. She told me so the last time she was here, and cried a little because she was afraid her back was growing—"

Here she stopped a moment, and then went on hurriedly: "Guy calls me a meddler, because I like to attend to other people's business, but I believe it right to meddle when you do it for good. If you were doing something, which you wouldn't do for the world if you knew it were wrong, don't you think a friend, who liked you, ought to tell you of it?"

"Yes," Marguerite answered, without the faintest idea what was coming next, or the blow in store for her, as Alice continued:

"I knew you would, and you'll not be angry,

because it is for Nannie's sake. You must not let her die. You must make it easier for her, or she will fade before your eyes and die as I am dying."

"Oh, Allie," Marguerite cried, beginning to understand the drift of Alice's meddling, while a feeling of remorse swept over her, as she remembered her thoughtlessness, which had let the whole burden of the household fall on Nannie, without helping to lift it, and as she recalled the white face, as she saw it lying back in the rocking chair in the kitchen, she said, with a sob, "Don't talk of Nannie's dying, for then I, too, should die; but I am glad you have told me and made me see how selfish and cruel I have been. Because it seemed so easy for her, and the work was done so soon, I have let her go on day after day, wearing her life out for me and the rest of us; but I am going to do better. I can learn to work and I will."

The tears were streaming down her face while Alice said to her, "Don't cry; tears are of no use, but act; that's the best always." Then, after a moment, she continued, "What else was I going to tell you? I am getting fearfully confused. Oh, I know, it was more about Nannie, and what I heard Evans and a neighbor, who was gossiping with her in the next room, say, the last time she was here. It was after Nannie went out, and they said, or the neighbor did, that it was a shame for her to work so hard, while you played the lady, and that you were to blame for her shoulder which troubles her at times."

"I to blame! How?" Marguerite asked in astonishment, and Alice replied: "You let her fall upon

her back the day you went away, they said, and that is why she is so weak and small, and I thought if you knew it you would help her more. Have I done wrong to tell you?" she asked, as she saw the whiteness which swept over Marguerite's face, and how she swayed in her chair as if in pain.

"No, no," Marguerite cried. "You did right to tell me. Why has no one done so before? And why have I been so blind? Oh, my darling Nannie, I think I see it all now."

Those who have been told something for which they were ignorantly in fault, and ought to have known before, can realize in part how Marguerite felt, as she tried as she had often done, to recall something of her early childhood at home,—how it came and went, the something she could almost remember, until suddenly her ear seemed to burn with the smart of a blow, while with a baby's cry was mingled a voice of anger and reproach. "That was Nannie's cry and mother's voice, and she boxed me on my ear," she whispered to herself, as she grasped the side of her chair to keep from falling, she was so dizzy, and the objects of the room whirled around her so fast. She had no thought now for anything but Nannie, and to get to her as soon as possible. Alice might be dying a hundred times, and she would not stay, she thought, as she rose and said, "I am going home to Nannie. I left her ill, and there is no one to care for her; no one ever has cared for her, and she has cared so much for us all;" but Alice grasped her with both hands and held her fast.

"You can't go now and leave me," she said,

"for if you do, I shall scream and leap out of bed, as I do when I am mad. I have been mad, you know, and I feel mad now."

She was holding her dress and looking at her with a wild glitter in her eyes which Marguerite could not mistake. But she answered very calmly, "No, I did not know," while Alice went on: "Yes, I have been twice in a mad-house in Philadelphia, and that is why it is better for me to die. Guy can't marry a crazy girl, you know."

It was just at this moment that Guy himself came in. He had been sitting in an adjoining room waiting for the conference to end, and wondering why Alice was so anxious to see Marguerite alone. She was apt to repeat things she ought not to, he knew, and he had often reproved her for it, but he had no suspicion of what she was saying, and sat patiently waiting until he heard her voice pitched on a key he recognized, and heard her say, "I have been twice in a mad-house in Philadelphia." She was divulging the secret which her mother and himself had guarded so carefully, and which, for her mother's sake, he had hoped would die with her, and he went to her at once, alarmed by the tone of her voice, and still more alarmed when he saw Marguerite trying to disengage herself from the hands which held her so fast.

"Alice!" he said, "what are you doing?" and instantly her hands loosed their hold on Marguerite's dress, while she sank back exhausted upon her pillows, whispering, "She wants to go, and I can't let her. Keep her, Guy."

"What is the matter, Miss Rathburn? Are you

faint?" the doctor asked, as he led her into the room he had just quitted, where he made her sit down, and said to her, "Now tell me what Alice has been saying to affect you so."

"Not now," Marguerite answered. "I have not time, for I must go home. I left Nannie ill, you know."

"You can't go until the storm abates. See how it has increased since you came in," the doctor replied, and looking up, Marguerite saw that what had been falling flakes of snow when she left home, was now sleet and rain, which beat against the windows, while the wind blew in gusts around the house, bending the tall pines almost to the ground, and then rushing with a shriek down the avenue and driving before it blinding sheets of rain.

It was a terrible storm, but Marguerite felt that she could brave it on foot for Nannie's sake, and said so to the doctor, who replied very decidedly, "I cannot let you go; nor will Nannie be alone, for our father and Jack will be indoors such a day as this. Sit here quietly and let me send you some tea, or coffee; you look quite upset and unnerved."

Marguerite declined the coffee, but took the tea, which Evans brought her; then, as there was no help for it, sat down upon the couch, feeling more wretched and conscience smitten than she had ever felt before. Why had no one told her, and why had she not herself seen her own thoughtlessness in taking her ease while Nannie worked on until she could endure no longer.

Then suddenly she remembered the hints which Mr. Catheron had once or twice given her with

regard to sparing Nannie; hints whose import she understood now, and her face was crimson with shame as she said to herself, "How she must despise me, but not more than I despise myself for playing the fine lady, as those people said in Alice's hearing, and leaving Nannie to drudge, for that is just it, drudge from morning till night, as if her dear little hands and feet could never tire, when all the time they were aching so hard, and her back, too—and I am the cause of that, they say. Oh, if she should grow deformed, I could never be happy again. But it must not be, it shall not be," and never had Nannie prayed more earnestly than Marguerite now did that the evil she feared might be averted. Then she remembered that Jack had said to her on the way from the station when she first came home, "If I see you shirking I shall tell you!" and she had shirked, and he hadn't told her. Why not? Why had everybody failed her, and why had she been so blind, and what could she do to make amends? she asked herself, as she sat listening to the murmur of voices in Alice's room, and watching the sleet and rain as it beat against the windows. She heard the clock strike three, and was thinking that she would go home, if she walked, when she was conscious of an unusual stir in Alice's room, and a moment after Dr. Catheron appeared, saying to her, "Alice is growing very restless, and is asking for you."

Her first thought was that she could not go to her, as she must go home, but the doctor's hand was upon her shoulder, and he led her to the room, where Alice was tossing from side to side, her cheeks burning with fever, her hands sometimes

beating the air and sometimes picking at the clothes, while she talked continually, now of the time when she was a little girl gathering violets on the bank of the Hudson River, and Guy came to her and told her he was to be her half-brother; now of her mother, who was sobbing on the couch by the window, now of Nannie, who, she said was coming soon, and for whom she should be waiting by the gate to let her in, and then as she grew more and more excited, of the mad-house where she fancied she was begging of the attendant to let her out of the padded box, as she called it. It was very terrible, and Marguerite, in the overstrained condition of her nerves, would have fallen, if Dr. Catheron had not put his arm across her shoulder just as Alice repeated her name, and said, "Where is Marguerite? Why doesn't she come and lay her hand on my head; it rests me so!"

"Can you do it?" the doctor asked, and bending over Alice, Marguerite put her hand upon the hot forehead, rubbing it gently until Alice grew quiet and whispered, "Keep it there. It is like a battery."

Marguerite's position was a painful one, and Dr. Catheron bade her sit down upon the bed, and brought a pillow for her back, and as the room was rather cold, for Alice could not bear the heat, he brought a shawl and wrapped it around her shoulders. Then he, too, sat down upon the other side of the bed, and with Marguerite, kept the long vigil, which, it seemed to her, would never end. Sometimes Alice slept, and sometimes she talked, and once, taking Guy's hand and Marguerite's, she joined them together and held them between her

own, while, with a smile which showed that her mind was wandering, she whispered, "Who was it that said, 'Barkis is willin'?' I don't remember, but I am like that person, I am willing."

Marguerite could not misunderstand her meaning, and wrenched her hand away, while her cheeks burned like fire. And so the watch went on, and she heard the clock strike four, and as Alice was asleep, she said to Dr. Catheron, "I must go now. The storm is over," and she pointed to the window, from which a gleam of sunshine could be seen breaking through the bank of clouds in the western sky. To this the doctor made no objections, and left the room to order the carriage. With a few words of sympathy to Mrs. Catheron, who was still weeping on the couch, Marguerite bent over Alice, whom she kissed upon her forehead, saying, "Good bye, little Allie, I shall never see you again;" then she went out and down to the hall, where Dr. Catheron was waiting for her, muffled in his fur-lined coat, for it had grown very cold since morning. To her look of surprise he answered, "I am going with you. Nannie may need some medicine. Take this cloak of Mrs. Catheron's; that jacket of yours is not warm enough."

He put it around her and fastened it at the throat, for the strength seemed to have left her hands, which hung nerveless at her side, and when they were in the carriage, he adjusted the rugs about her feet with a thoughtfulness and care which she fully appreciated, but could not thank him for then, her mind was so full of another subject.

"Dr. Catheron," she began, as soon as the door was

closed, and they were driving down the avenue. "Do you think the trouble with Nannie's shoulder came from a fall, and if you do why have you never told me? And why have I been allowed to sit idly by while she worked her life away?"

It was growing dark, but the doctor could see the brightness of Marguerite's eyes and the whiteness of her face, and guessed why Alice had been so anxious to see her.

"What do you mean?" he asked, and Marguerite replied:

"You know what I mean. Everybody knows. Alice told me, and I am so sorry for my past indolence and thoughtlessness. I believe Nannie is dearer to me than I am to myself, and yet I have let her go on day after day, working, working, working, while I played the lady. That's what the neighbors said. Alice heard them, and she told me. I wish she had done it before. Why didn't you?" and she turned almost fiercely towards him.

"It was not my place," the doctor replied, trying to soothe and comfort her and find excuses for her, by telling her she accused herself too harshly, that Nannie was not so bad, that rest and care would undoubtedly restore her, and that although the high shoulder might be the result of the fall, he did not think that it would ever trouble her more than it did now. "And even if it does," he added, "you are not responsible; you were too young to know what you were doing."

They had reached the farm-house by this time, and, helping Marguerite alight from the carriage, he went with her to the kitchen, where he found both

Mr. Rathburn and Jack trying to prepare the supper, while Nannie sat giving directions, her throat bound up in a towel and a handkerchief tied tightly around her head, which, in answer to Marguerite's eager inquiries she said was aching "just a little." Nannie never admitted that there was much the matter with her, but on this occasion the doctor knew better, although he did not say so. Her fever was very high and her symptoms were such as puzzled him.

"Your place is in bed, little girl," he said, as he prescribed for her, and then, telling them he would send word early in the morning as to Alice's condition, hurried back to the Pines.

The next morning about eight o'clock when Marguerite was struggling with the first breakfast she had ever prepared, and burning her fingers on the hot griddles, while Nannie, who had insisted upon dressing herself and coming down stairs, was sitting near the stove bundled up in a shawl and telling her what to do, there came a note from Dr. Catheron, which read as follows:

"DEAR MISS RATHBURN:

"Alice died last night about eleven o'clock, very calmly and peacefully, like a child going to sleep. She was perfectly rational at the last and left many kind messages for her friends, especially for you and Nannie. Her mother is in bed quite prostrated with grief, and it would be a great comfort to her, as it would to all of us, to see you, if only for a few moments; but perhaps you cannot come. How is Nannie this morning, and does she need my services? I am exceedingly busy with preparations for the funeral, which will take place to-morrow morning at

the house in time for the New York train, as Allie is to be buried in Greenwood beside her father. Come if you can.

"Yours truly,

"GUY CATHERON."

This note Marguerite read and then passed to Nannie.

"Oh, Allie. Dead! and I shall never see her again. Can't I go up there?" Nannie cried, her tears falling fast as she thought of the dear friend she had loved so much.

But Marguerite said: "No, Nannie, you are fitter to have the doctor than to go to the Pines. I think I shall have him come here;" but this Nannie would not permit.

He had enough to do, she said, without troubling himself for her, and a message was sent to the doctor that Nannie did not need him, and that, if possible, Marguerite would call at the Pines sometime during the day. Then she returned to the breakfast, to which she at last sat down with her father and Jack, while Nannie took her bowl of gruel, which she had made herself, and which was the only palatable dish upon the table, for the coffee was muddy, the baked potatoes burned, and the fried eggs looked, as Jack thought, more like rubber balls than eggs; but neither he nor his father complained, and after breakfast was over, Jack offered to wash the dishes, if it was necessary, and said he could get the dinner if Nan would coach him a little. But Marguerite declined his services, and gave her entire attention to the dinner, which was a greater success than the breakfast had been, and when it was over

Nannie insisted so strongly upon her going to the Pines that she finally consented, and with Jack, started in the old yellow sleigh, which had been brought out from the barn, and was a fit companion for Pedler and the Pie Wagon.

Mrs. Catheron was still in bed, overcome with grief. Thus everything devolved upon the doctor, who took Marguerite to the room where Alice lay upon the couch, clad in a soft white gown, which she had insisted upon having made for her in New York on her way home from Philadelphia, and which she was now wearing for the first time. The conservatory had been stripped of its flowers, which were scattered about her in great profusion, while she lay among them, the fairest flower of all, with a look of perfect peace upon her face, and a smile upon the lips, whose last word had been the name of Guy.

"Side by side you will stand together some day and look upon me dead, and I shall know it, too," Alice had said in one of the strange moods whose nature Marguerite now understood.

And she was standing there side by side with Guy, looking upon the dead girl, who, after her short life of unrest, seemed to sleep so well, and Marguerite remembered what she had said, and felt a cold shiver creep over her as she thought, "Does she know that we are here, and does she care?" And as she thought it, she instinctively drew away from the doctor, for it seemed to her that the smile around the lips had faded rather than deepened in answer to her thought. It was Dr. Catheron who spoke first: "Poor little Allie, to die so young, and

life was so sweet to her, and yet it is better than to live to be what she surely would have been." As Marguerite did not answer, he went on: "She told you the secret which has darkened our home, so I can speak of it to you, although it need only be talked about in your own family. Just when the malady first manifested itself I do not know. Physicians who make insanity a specialty, say that she was born with it, and perhaps they are right, as the disease in her case is hereditary. Her mother says she was always a strange child, loving and sweet as a rule, but given to wayward moods and fancies, in which she had visions, as she called them, saying she could see into the future. As she grew older she seemed better, and it was not until three or four years ago that she became so violent that we sent her to Philadelphia, where she had the kindest of care and attention, and where Evans, who was her nurse when a baby, was always with her as her maid. Among her many peculiarities I may mention that when an idea, whether correct or incorrect, once took possession of her, it was impossible to remove it entirely, and so she lived under some delusions, which, however, did not harm her, although they sometimes annoyed others."

Here he stopped with the manner of one who has something more to say, but does not think best to say it. His voice, when he spoke of Alice, was very sad, but otherwise he seemed calm and composed, and as Marguerite thought, more like a brother speaking of his lost sister than like a lover talking of his dead fiancée. After standing a moment longer, Marguerite kissed the white face,

Nannie insisted so strongly upon her going to the Pines that she finally consented, and with Jack, started in the old yellow sleigh, which had been brought out from the barn, and was a fit companion for Pedler and the Pie Wagon.

Mrs. Catheron was still in bed, overcome with grief. Thus everything devolved upon the doctor, who took Marguerite to the room where Alice lay upon the couch, clad in a soft white gown, which she had insisted upon having made for her in New York on her way home from Philadelphia, and which she was now wearing for the first time. The conservatory had been stripped of its flowers, which were scattered about her in great profusion, while she lay among them, the fairest flower of all, with a look of perfect peace upon her face, and a smile upon the lips, whose last word had been the name of Guy.

"Side by side you will stand together some day and look upon me dead, and I shall know it, too," Alice had said in one of the strange moods whose nature Marguerite now understood.

And she was standing there side by side with Guy, looking upon the dead girl, who, after her short [illegible] of unrest, seemed to sleep so well, and Marguerite remembered what she had said, and felt a cold shiver creep over her as she thought, "Does she know that we are here, and does she care?" And she thought she instinctively drew away from the doctor. It seemed to her that the smile around the lips had faded rather than deepened in answer to her [illegible] It was Dr. Catheron who [illegible]: "Poor little Allie, to die so young, and

life was so sweet to her, and yet it is better than to live to be what she surely would have been." As Marguerite did not answer, he went on: "She told you the secret which has darkened our home, so I can speak of it to you, although it need only be talked about in your own family. Just when the malady first manifested itself I do not know. Physicians who make insanity a specialty, say that she was born with it, and perhaps they are right, as the disease in her case is hereditary. Her mother says she was always a strange child, loving and sweet as a rule, but given to wayward moods and fancies, in which she had visions, as she called them, saying she could see into the future. As she grew older she seemed better, and it was not until three or four years ago that she became so violent that we sent her to Philadelphia, where she had the kindest of care and attention, and where Evans, who was her nurse when a baby, was always with her as her maid. Among her many peculiarities I may mention that when an idea, whether correct or incorrect, once took possession of her, it was impossible to remove it entirely, and so she lived under some delusions, which, however, did not harm her, although they sometimes annoyed others."

Here he stopped with the manner of one who has something more to say, but does not think best to say it. His voice, when he spoke of Alice, was very sad, but otherwise he seemed calm and composed, and as Marguerite thought, more like a brother speaking of his lost sister than like a lover talking of his dead fiancée. After standing a moment longer, Marguerite kissed the white face,

and left the room, followed by Dr. Catheron, who went with her to the sleigh, into which he put her, and then stood watching it until it disappeared down the road.

The next morning at an early hour, for the New York train left at ten, the burial service was read by the rector from Millville, in the drawing-room at the Pines, where only a few were assembled besides the family and the bearers, who carried out the white coffin and placed it in the hearse, which was to take it to the station. Nannie was watching for it, with Marguerite beside her, and Dr. Catheron saw them both and lifted his hat, while Nannie involuntarily kissed her hand, not to him, as Marguerite thought, but to Allie, to whom she was saying good-bye forever.

"She was the dearest friend I ever had except you, and if you were not here now what should I do?" she said, as she turned to Marguerite, on whose arm she laid her head like a weary child, adding, "And now I am so tired. I don't believe I can sit up any longer. Take me to bed, please."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

LA GRIPPE.

It was on Thursday that Alice Grainger was buried in Greenwood, and the doctor, who left Mrs. Catheron in New York with some friends, did not return to the Pines until late Saturday afternoon.

Then he found upon his office table a note from Marguerite, who had written:

"Please come to us as soon as you receive this. Nannie is very ill. MARGUERITE RATHBURN."

"Nannie very ill! I am not surprised, and am sorry I stayed so long in New York. I will go to her at once," the doctor said, as he read the note, and ordering Nero to be brought round, he was soon riding rapidly towards the farm-house, with a presentiment in his heart of impending danger. He was not at all superstitious, nor had he the slightest faith in Alice's crazy predictions, which he knew were the result of a diseased brain, but she had said so much recently about Nannie's joining her soon, that the fear lest she might die was haunting him all the way to the farm-house. It was quite dark when he reached it, seeing no sign of life except the gleam of light which shone through the shutters of Marguerite's room, where Nannie was lying, with feverish cheeks and aching head, and her mind occasionally wandering.

On her return from the Pines after her interview with Alice, Marguerite had made a vigorous attack upon Jack, who, by the light of a lantern, was feeding the pigs in the barn, and whose breath she nearly shook out of him before he knew what she was doing, or what she meant.

"Jack," she exclaimed, pouncing upon him and seizing him by the coat collar, "why didn't you tell me I was shirking? You promised you would when you drove me home from the station, and you

haven't done it, and I have been playing the fine lady, they say, and letting Nannie die by inches."

In his surprise Jack dropped the pail, the contents of which came near spattering Marguerite's black dress.

"Why, Margret," he said, trying to shake himself free from her. "What do you mean by lighting on a fellow like this, and holding him so tight? You've got a lock of my hair in with my coat collar. Leg'go! You're worse than Nan was that day she told me you was my sister, and stuck her nails into me like a cat. What is it? And what have you shirked?"

"Everything!" Marguerite answered. "Everything! I've been a perfect drone in the hive, and let Nannie go on until—Oh, Jack! What if she should die!"

"Nan ain't the kind that dies so easy," Jack said. "She's just like a rubber ball. Step on her to-day and she comes up to-morrow. But tell me what you mean?"

Very rapidly Marguerite told him all she had heard from Alice, and asked what he thought of it.

"Think of it?" Jack replied, as he began to feed the cows and old Pedler, who was whinneying for his supper. "I think Miss Grainger might have been in better business than telling all she knows. She told Nan that you were her sister, and sent her off into the tallest kind of a tantrum you ever saw, and then she told her that you were in New York, and sent her into another; and now she has told you what a lot of old women said. I call that meddling!"

"But, Jack, I ought to have known it, and you

should have told me yourself. Why didn't you?" Marguerite asked.

"Well, because I didn't think of it after you came," Jack answered. "I've always been used to seeing Nan work, and she does it so quick and easy, without any fuss, that I don't suppose I thought it was so hard, and then—" Jack hesitated a moment, and by the light of the lantern Marguerite could see the kindling of the boy's brown eyes as they rested admiringly upon her, while he continued, "You look so neat and so different from us folks, who have to work, that it seemed natural for you to sit in the sunshine and play the lady, as those old muffs said, and only flirt the towel for dinner. I believe you have done that."

There was a slight tone of sarcasm in his voice as he said this, but Marguerite did not notice it, and answered sadly, "Yes, I have flirted the towel, and that is all, except— Oh, Jack, they say I dropped Nannie when she was a baby, and that is the cause of her high shoulder. Do you know anything about that?"

Jack did know, and setting down his lantern and planting himself against the barn door he replied, "Yes. I heard Sally Marsh telling it to another old crone. You did drop Nan, but they said—" and Jack's voice was very low as he went on, "they said that mother was in one of her moods writing poetry, and got into it so deep that she didn't mind Nannie screaming in the cradle, but told you to take her up and amuse her. It was like a cat carrying a kitten, and you dropped her, of course; but mother was to blame, and she knows it, too; for once when

haven't done it, and I have been playing the fine lady, they say, and letting Nannie die by inches."

In his surprise Jack dropped the pail, the contents of which came near spattering Marguerite's black dress.

"Why, Margret," he said, trying to shake himself free from her. "What do you mean by lighting on a fellow like this, and holding him so tight? You've got a lock of my hair in with my coat collar. Leg'go! You're worse than Nan was that day she told me you was my sister, and stuck her nails into me like a cat. What is it? And what have you shirked?"

"Everything!" Marguerite answered. "Everything! I've been a perfect drone in the hive, and let Nannie go on until—Oh, Jack! What if she should die!"

"Nan ain't the kind that dies so easy," Jack said. "She's just like a rubber ball. Step on her to-day and she comes up to-morrow. But tell me what you mean?"

Very rapidly Marguerite told him all she had heard from Alice, and asked what he thought of it.

"Think of it?" Jack replied, as he began to feed the cows and old Pedler, who was whinneying for his supper. "I think Miss Grainger might have been in better business than telling all she knows. She told Nan that you were her sister, and sent her off into the tallest kind of a tantrum you ever saw, and then she told her that you were in New York, and sent her into another; and now she has told you what a lot of old women said. I call that meddling!"

"But, Jack, I ought to have known it, and you

should have told me yourself. Why didn't you?" Marguerite asked.

"Well, because I didn't think of it after you came," Jack answered. "I've always been used to seeing Nan work, and she does it so quick and easy, without any fuss, that I don't suppose I thought it was so hard, and then—" Jack hesitated a moment, and by the light of the lantern Marguerite could see the kindling of the boy's brown eyes as they rested admiringly upon her, while he continued, "You look so neat and so different from us folks, who have to work, that it seemed natural for you to sit in the sunshine and play the lady, as those old muffs said, and only flirt the towel for dinner. I believe you have done that."

There was a slight tone of sarcasm in his voice as he said this, but Marguerite did not notice it, and answered sadly, "Yes, I have flirted the towel, and that is all, except— Oh, Jack, they say I dropped Nannie when she was a baby, and that is the cause of her high shoulder. Do you know anything about that?"

Jack did know, and setting down his lantern and planting himself against the barn door he replied, "Yes. I heard Sally Marsh telling it to another old crone. You did drop Nan, but they said—" and Jack's voice was very low as he went on, "they said that mother was in one of her moods writing poetry, and got into it so deep that she didn't mind Nannie screaming in the cradle, but told you to take her up and amuse her. It was like a cat carrying a kitten, and you dropped her, of course; but mother was to blame, and she knows it, too; for once when

she thought she was going to die, and was convicted, as they call it when all your meanness rises up before you, and had sent for the minister, I heard her say she had been guilty of flagrant culpability, which she feared had resulted in permanent physical harm to one of her children. I remember it because the words were so big, and I felt rather proud of her, and asked Nan to hunt some of them out in the dictionary. I didn't know what she meant then, but did afterwards when I heard Sally Marsh and that other old gossip talking. Nan don't know it, and if I'se you I wouldn't tell her, and I wouldn't hang myself either, because I'd shirked. You can go to work now. There's enough to do, and I'll help you."

Jack little dreamed how much comfort he had given Marguerite, whose heart was much lighter as she started with him for the house, talking as she went.

"Do you see these hands?" she said, stretching them out in front of her, and Jack in his dry way replied, "How can I see them in the dark when you have flirted your skirts into the lantern and put it out?"

Ordinarily Jack's answer would have amused Marguerite, but she did not think of it now, and went on rapidly: "Well, I can see them, if you can't, and I know they are twice as big as Nannie's, and they are going to work hereafter, and she is going to rest. You'll see what I can do. Playing the lady indeed! There's no more play for me, if I know myself."

Marguerite said nothing to Nannie that night of

her new resolution, and after a little reflection during the hours she lay awake, she decided not to do so at present. The next morning she was in the kitchen as soon as her father, and when, half an hour later, Nannie appeared, she made her sit down, and said to her laughingly, "There's mutiny on the ship, and I have taken the helm, and you are to keep quiet and occasionally give an order when I am steering too near the rocks."

Nannie was too ill to protest very much, although she felt as a thrifty housekeeper, who has never had a servant, feels, when a raw specimen is suddenly brought into the kitchen, and she kept up until the morning when she saw the funeral train go by, and laying her head on Marguerite's shoulder, asked to be taken to bed.

When the back stair door was left open, Marguerite's room was comfortable, even in severe weather, from the heat of the big stove in the dining room, but Nannie's was always cold. Remembering this, Marguerite took her into her own bright, sunny room, against which Nannie protested.

"I mustn't stay here," she said, "and you can't stand it in my room where it is so cold when the wind blows from the north."

"The very reason I've brought you here," Marguerite replied, as she kept on undressing her sister, who was soon in bed, and who sank down among the pillows with a sigh of content, as if it were pleasant for once to be cared for as Marguerite was caring for her, bathing her forehead and hands, and realizing, as she had never done before, how small and thin the latter were, and thinking how much

they had done for the comfort of others, and how useless hers had been.

They were very tender and loving now as they brushed and twisted up Nannie's hair, and tied over it a pointed lace-bordered handkerchief to keep it in place, while Nannie kept talking of the domestic matters which she could not dismiss from her mind. She had insisted upon making bread that morning, and her last whispered injunction to Marguerite was, "Don't let it burn; twenty minutes more is long enough, and don't forget mother's tea at eleven, and don't forget,—I can't think of it all, there is so much. Please God, help Marguerite to remember, and don't let her get tired as I am."

Dear, unselfish Nannie! thinking only of others, when her body was full of pain, and her head so dizzy that she hardly knew what she was saying. How Marguerite cried over her and kissed her, and then went down to the kitchen, which had never seemed so desolate as it did now with Nannie out of it. And how helpless she was with no one to tell her what to do, except Jack, whose ideas were rather crude, and whose directions were of a most astounding nature. Of course she forgot her mother's tea, and the bread was burned to a cinder, while the pie which she and Jack concocted together was such as even Brindle would not eat, and the dinner worse than anything Mr. Rathburn had ever sat down to in the days when his wife was in her most soaring moods. But neither he nor Jack complained, for both knew that Marguerite was doing her best, while Nannie didn't know it, and would have enjoyed the luxury of rest in the pretty room,

with Marguerite to wait upon her, and her father and Jack coming so often to ask how she was, and her mother writing her messages in rhyme, if it had not been for the pain in her head, and the frequent odor of burned meat and vegetables which came up from the kitchen and told her the state of things in that region. Marguerite was always hopeful, and Jack assured her things were going on tip-top. But Nannie was not altogether deceived, and would have gone down, if she had not grown worse so rapidly that on Saturday morning, learning that Dr. Catheron had not yet returned, Marguerite sug gested sending to Millville for a physician. But to this Nannie would not listen. No one could help her but Dr. Catheron. She would wait for him, she said, and Marguerite despatched a note to the Pines, asking him to come as soon as he received it.

She had been watching for him at intervals all the afternoon, but did not see him when he at last tied Nero to the hitching post and walked up to the house. As his knock was not answered he entered unannounced, and, guided by the smell of a kerosene lamp, made his way to the kitchen, where he found the smoking lamp standing on the reservoir of the red hot stove, over which Marguerite was bending, and alternately stirring a dish of cocoa for her mother and gruel for Nannie, both of which would have boiled over with a great splutter if the doctor had not lifted them quickly and deposited them upon the hearth. Marguerite had been so absorbed in what she was doing that she did not see him until he rescued the cocoa and the gruel from peril, and was standing close to her.

"Oh, Dr. Catheron," she said, with a ring of joy in her voice which brought him a little closer to her, "Oh, Dr. Catheron, I am so glad you have come. Nannie is very ill. Mother has had a hysteric fit. Father and Jack have gone to the village. The stove is so hot, and the lamp smokes awfully and will not burn, and I don't know what to do."

She had confided to him the entire list of her grievances in a breath, while her lips quivered, and there was a look in her face which touched the doctor at once and awoke in him a great pity for this girl, who, only a year ago, was the belle of many a foreign salon, and who now, in that cheerless kitchen, was trying to do a servant's work.

"Yes, I see," he said, "you've had a lot of worry; but never mind, we will fix all that. I shall cure Nannie, your mother will soon be better, your father and Jack will come home, and as for the stove, I think the best remedy for that is to close the drafts and remove the hot griddles for a few moments.

Suiting the action to the word, he took the griddles off himself, and then turning to the lamp with its blackened, sputtering wick, continued, "It only wants trimming and oil. Where is the can and the shears?"

"Oh-h," Marguerite exclaimed, as she brought the shears and can, and watched him while he put the ailing lamp in order. "Nannie has told me every day not to forget the lamps, but I have, and am just like the foolish virgins. Shall I ever learn?"

"Of course you will," the doctor replied, as he

turned up the wick of the lamp, which now burned clearly and brightly and sent a cheerful light through the dark kitchen. "Now, I must see Nannie," he continued, and was soon standing by the bed, where Nannie lay apparently asleep, although her lips moved once, and they heard the name of Alice.

"She has talked of her at times just as if she were here, and once asked if I could not see her. Don't you think her very ill?" Marguerite said, and at the sound of her voice, Nannie opened her eyes and smiled into her face as she always did.

"Is it all right?" she asked, and the doctor replied, "Yes, Nannie, all right, or we shall make it so. Where do you feel the worst?"

Nannie expressed no surprise at seeing him, but answered readily, "All over; there is not a spot in my body which does not ache; but don't mind me See to Marguerite, who is so tired; and where is Alice? She has been here all the afternoon. Why has she gone away?"

This looked serious, and Nannie was unquestionably very ill, but after asking her a few more questions which she answered rationally, a light suddenly broke into the doctor's mind, and he said to her, "My little girl, you have La Grippe. I know the madame, for I saw her twice yesterday in New York, and you have the honor of introducing her into this neighborhood."

Nannie did not know what he meant, but Marguerite had heard of the strange disease which had taken so firm a hold on Nannie. She did not, however, know that it ever proved fatal, and with a great

"Oh, Dr. Catheron," she said, with a ring of joy in her voice which brought him a little closer to her, "Oh, Dr. Catheron, I am so glad you have come. Nannie is very ill. Mother has had a hysteric fit. Father and Jack have gone to the village. The stove is so hot, and the lamp smokes awfully and will not burn, and I don't know what to do."

She had confided to him the entire list of her grievances in a breath, while her lips quivered, and there was a look in her face which touched the doctor at once and awoke in him a great pity for this girl, who, only a year ago, was the belle of many a foreign salon, and who now, in that cheerless kitchen, was trying to do a servant's work.

"Yes, I see," he said, "you've had a lot of worry; but never mind, we will fix all that. I shall cure Nannie, your mother will soon be better, your father and Jack will come home, and as for the stove, I think the best remedy for that is to close the drafts and remove the hot griddles for a few moments.

Suiting the action to the word, he took the griddles off himself, and then turning to the lamp with its blackened, sputtering wick, continued, "It only wants trimming and oil. Where is the can and the shears?"

"Oh-h," Marguerite exclaimed, as she brought the shears and can, and watched him while he put the ailing lamp in order. "Nannie has told me every day not to forget the lamps, but I have, and am just like the foolish virgins. Shall I ever learn?"

"Of course you will," the doctor replied, as he

turned up the wick of the lamp, which now burned clearly and brightly and sent a cheerful light through the dark kitchen. "Now, I must see Nannie," he continued, and was soon standing by the bed, where Nannie lay apparently asleep, although her lips moved once, and they heard the name of Alice.

"She has talked of her at times just as if she were here, and once asked if I could not see her. Don't you think her very ill?" Marguerite said, and at the sound of her voice, Nannie opened her eyes and smiled into her face as she always did.

"Is it all right?" she asked, and the doctor replied, "Yes, Nannie, all right, or we shall make it so. Where do you feel the worst?"

Nannie expressed no surprise at seeing him, but answered readily, "All over; there is not a spot in my body which does not ache; but don't mind me See to Marguerite, who is so tired; and where is Alice? She has been here all the afternoon. Why has she gone away?"

This looked serious, and Nannie was unquestionably very ill, but after asking her a few more questions which she answered rationally, a light suddenly broke into the doctor's mind, and he said to her, "My little girl, you have La Grippe. I know the madame, for I saw her twice yesterday in New York, and you have the honor of introducing her into this neighborhood."

Nannie did not know what he meant, but Marguerite had heard of the strange disease which had taken so firm a hold on Nannie. She did not, however, know that it ever proved fatal, and with a great

"Oh, Dr. Catheron," she said, with a ring of joy in her voice which brought him a little closer to her, "Oh, Dr. Catheron, I am so glad you have come. Nannie is very ill. Mother has had a hysteric fit. Father and Jack have gone to the village. The stove is so hot, and the lamp smokes awfully and will not burn, and I don't know what to do."

She had confided to him the entire list of her grievances in a breath, while her lips quivered, and there was a look in her face which touched the doctor at once and awoke in him a great pity for this girl, who, only a year ago, was the belle of many a foreign salon, and who now, in that cheerless kitchen, was trying to do a servant's work.

"Yes, I see," he said, "you've had a lot of worry; but never mind, we will fix all that. I shall cure Nannie, your mother will soon be better, your father and Jack will come home, and as for the stove, I think the best remedy for that is to close the drafts and remove the hot griddles for a few moments.

Suiting the action to the word, he took the griddles off himself, and then turning to the lamp with its blackened, sputtering wick, continued, "It only wants trimming and oil. Where is the can and the shears?"

"Oh-h," Marguerite exclaimed, as she brought the shears and can, and watched him while he put the ailing lamp in order. "Nannie has told me every day not to forget the lamps, but I have, and am just like the foolish virgins. Shall I ever learn?"

"Of course you will," the doctor replied, as he

turned up the wick of the lamp, which now burned clearly and brightly and sent a cheerful light through the dark kitchen. "Now, I must see Nannie," he continued, and was soon standing by the bed, where Nannie lay apparently asleep, although her lips moved once, and they heard the name of Alice.

"She has talked of her at times just as if she were here, and once asked if I could not see her. Don't you think her very ill?" Marguerite said, and at the sound of her voice, Nannie opened her eyes and smiled into her face as she always did.

"Is it all right?" she asked, and the doctor replied, "Yes, Nannie, all right, or we shall make it so. Where do you feel the worst?"

Nannie expressed no surprise at seeing him, but answered readily, "All over; there is not a spot in my body which does not ache; but don't mind me See to Marguerite, who is so tired; and where is Alice? She has been here all the afternoon. Why has she gone away?"

This looked serious, and Nannie was unquestionably very ill, but after asking her a few more questions which she answered rationally, a light suddenly broke into the doctor's mind, and he said to her, "My little girl, you have La Grippe. I know the madame, for I saw her twice yesterday in New York, and you have the honor of introducing her into this neighborhood."

Nannie did not know what he meant, but Marguerite had heard of the strange disease which had taken so firm a hold on Nannie. She did not, however, know that it ever proved fatal, and with a great

"Oh, Dr. Catheron," she said, with a ring of joy in her voice which brought him a little closer to her, "Oh, Dr. Catheron, I am so glad you have come. Nannie is very ill. Mother has had a hysteric fit. Father and Jack have gone to the village. The stove is so hot, and the lamp smokes awfully and will not burn, and I don't know what to do."

She had confided to him the entire list of her grievances in a breath, while her lips quivered, and there was a look in her face which touched the doctor at once and awoke in him a great pity for this girl, who, only a year ago, was the belle of many a foreign salon, and who now, in that cheerless kitchen, was trying to do a servant's work.

"Yes, I see," he said, "you've had a lot of worry; but never mind, we will fix all that. I shall cure Nannie, your mother will soon be better, your father and Jack will come home, and as for the stove, I think the best remedy for that is to close the drafts and remove the hot griddles for a few moments.

Suiting the action to the word, he took the griddles off himself, and then turning to the lamp with its blackened, sputtering wick, continued, "It only wants trimming and oil. Where is the can and the shears?"

"Oh-h," Marguerite exclaimed, as she brought the shears and can, and watched him while he put the ailing lamp in order. "Nannie has told me every day not to forget the lamps, but I have, and am just like the foolish virgins. Shall I ever learn?"

"Of course you will," the doctor replied, as he

turned up the wick of the lamp, which now burned clearly and brightly and sent a cheerful light through the dark kitchen. "Now, I must see Nannie," he continued, and was soon standing by the bed, where Nannie lay apparently asleep, although her lips moved once, and they heard the name of Alice.

"She has talked of her at times just as if she were here, and once asked if I could not see her. Don't you think her very ill?" Marguerite said, and at the sound of her voice, Nannie opened her eyes and smiled into her face as she always did.

"Is it all right?" she asked, and the doctor replied, "Yes, Nannie, all right, or we shall make it so. Where do you feel the worst?"

Nannie expressed no surprise at seeing him, but answered readily, "All over; there is not a spot in my body which does not ache; but don't mind me See to Marguerite, who is so tired; and where is Alice? She has been here all the afternoon. Why has she gone away?"

This looked serious, and Nannie was unquestionably very ill, but after asking her a few more questions which she answered rationally, a light suddenly broke into the doctor's mind, and he said to her, "My little girl, you have La Grippe. I know the madame, for I saw her twice yesterday in New York, and you have the honor of introducing her into this neighborhood."

Nannie did not know what he meant, but Marguerite had heard of the strange disease which had taken so firm a hold on Nannie. She did not, however, know that it ever proved fatal, and with a great

load lifted from her mind, she listened to the doctor's directions, and then went with him to see her mother, whom he found crying like a child over the trouble which had fallen upon them. But the doctor knew how to comfort her, and after assuring her that Nannie was in no immediate danger, he gave her some powders of sugar and flour, which he told her she might take *ad libitum*. He always used big words with her because he knew she liked it, and feeling morally certain that by to-morrow she would, if possible, develop symptoms similar to Nannie's, he went into the kitchen, where Marguerite was trying to prepare supper for her father and Jack. She had laid the table, which, simple as it was, looked so inviting that when Mr. Rathburn, who had just come in, asked him to stay to supper, he was half prompted to do so, knowing how infinitely preferable that humble meal, with Marguerite at the table pouring his tea, would be to the elaborate dinner he should find waiting for him at home. But Marguerite did not second her father's invitation, and he took his leave and went back to his lonely house, with a greater sense of depression than he had felt before. How desolate and still it was, and how his footsteps on the marble floor echoed in the stillness as he crossed the hall and ascended the stairs, turning involuntarily in the direction he always took on his return after an absence of any length. Then, remembering that Alice was not there, he went to his own apartment to prepare for the dinner which William served with as much ceremony as if a dozen guests were sitting at the table, instead of the solitary man, who, from force of habit, kept listening

for any sound, which should tell him that he was needed in the chamber from which Alice was gone forever. He had often been alone when Mrs. Catheron and Alice were in Philadelphia, but he had never felt so utterly alone as now, when, after dinner, he sat trying to read his paper, the contents of which he did not at all understand, so continually was he haunted with thoughts of Alice, who seemed so near to him that he would scarcely have been surprised had he seen her coming towards him with outstretched arms and the words of endearment with which she always greeted him. Folding his paper at last he went over in his mind with every incident of his acquaintance with the girl who had been more trouble to him than comfort.

"Poor Allie," he said, "I could not love her as she did me, but God knows I tried to do what I thought was right, and if she had lived and been restored, I might, perhaps, have made her my wife. I don't know."

And then there came over him suddenly a feeling of freedom for which he hated himself, while the thought of Marguerite Rathburn rose before him, and her eyes looked at him again, as they had looked that evening when she had greeted him so joyfully. But with her came a thought of Harry Bellamy, to whom she was engaged, and he ground his teeth hard, as he walked the floor an hour or more, now accusing himself of disloyalty to Alice, and again revelling in the thought of the joy it would be to have Marguerite there with him as Alice had predicted she one day would be.

The next morning he was early at the farm-house,

where he found Nannie much worse, while Mrs. Rathburn was doing her best to have La Grippe, and Marguerite, with an anxious look upon her face, was going from one room to the other.

"She ought to have help or she will break down," he said to Mr. Rathburn, and Jack was at once dispatched for Sally Marsh, who was soon installed in the kitchen, leaving Marguerite free to give her time to her mother and sister.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MARGUERITE'S DIAMONDS.

"It was only the Grip," the neighbors said, when they heard of Nannie's serious illness, but it had laid its hand upon her with a grasp which it did not seem willing to loosen, and each succeeding day she grew steadily worse.

The pain in her head made her delirious, while the chills, which crept over her like the cold hand of death, shook her as a reed is shaken by the wind, and then the fever came and scorched her blood and stained her cheeks a purple hue, and when at last the disease had run its course, it left her so helpless that she would lie for hours never moving so much as her hands, which had lost their brownness, and were almost transparent as they lay across her breast. She did not talk much, and when she did it was of the trouble she was making, and of the affairs

in the kitchen, which were in rather a sad condition. Sally Marsh had staid a week and then was stricken with rheumatism, and Marguerite was left to act in the double capacity of housekeeper and nurse. Mr. Rathburn had at once tried to get some help, but most of the girls were either working in the factories or shoe shops in Millville, and those who were not and whose services were good for anything, would not go into the country for less than three or four dollars a week, a price he could not pay. He had never been able to lay up any money, and the last year's crops, upon which he had depended so much, had failed, leaving him poorer than before. This he explained to Marguerite, who answered very cheerfully, "Never mind, father, I shall get through somehow. Nannie would, and I am a great deal stronger than she ever was."

But the strain upon her was very great, and she was beginning to flag, when one morning, as she was deep in the mysteries of bread-making, Dr. Catheron came in so quietly that she did not know he was there until he said, close to her ear, "That will never do."

She had her sleeves above her elbows and was kneading the bread with all her strength, while standing open before her was a cook book, at least thirty or forty years old, which she had unearthed from some cupboard or closet, and whose directions she was following implicitly. Without turning her head when the doctor spoke to her, she answered laughingly, "Yes, it will do, too. I'm doing it exactly as Miss Beecher says. My last bread was very good, and I think this will be, too,"

"I am sure of it," the doctor replied, watching her as she worked, and admiring the round white arms, on which, when he first saw them bare, costly bracelets were flashing.

There were spots of flour upon them now, and also upon her hair, where, at the Marquis's ball, there had been a diamond butterfly, but she had never looked half so fair or attractive to him as she did now in Nannie's bib-apron, with the flush of exercise upon her cheeks.

"There," she said, as she molded the bread into loaves and put them into the tins to rise, "you'll see it will be all right. I'm getting to be a famous housewife, and if Nannie was only well, I believe I should like it. I'm doing something for others now, and that is a pleasure I never had before."

"Yes, I know," the doctor said, "but it wasn't the bread I meant when I said 'it wouldn't do.' Sit down by me a moment, I want to talk to you."

He drew a chair close to his own, and brushing the flour from her arms and pulling down her sleeves, an act which he regretted, she sat down beside him, and he began: "I was thinking of you, Miss Rathburn. Don't you know that you are working too hard? You can never stand it. You are not accustomed to it as Nannie was, and she broke down. You must have help, for it will be a long time before Nannie can wait upon herself, and she needs your care quite as much as ever. Nannie must not be neglected."

"I know it, Dr. Catheron," Marguerite replied, "and Nannie will not be neglected, but a servant is out of the question. Father has tried, but no one

will come into the country, or into a family where there is sickness, for less than three or four dollars a week, and that we cannot pay. Father told me so, and feels worse about it than I do. His crops were all cut off last fall, and he has so little left that I shall get along alone. Jack helps me a great deal, and father, too, but perhaps I ought not to have told you all this, and I should not, only you seem so much like one of us, and are so fond of Nannie," she added, while the doctor bit his lips to keep back the offer of money which he was tempted to make her, and which he felt sure would be taken as an insult.

She had risen and was washing her hands at the sink. Then she took from the clock shelf, where she had put them when she commenced her bread-making, the diamond rings which she always wore, and which she knew were very valuable. And as the costly stones flashed before her eyes, there came into her mind a thought which made her heart beat with gladness, and turning to Dr. Catheron, she said, "I have a plan by which we can have the girl, and Nannie can have the wine and fruits, and everything she needs to make her well. I will tell you about it to-morrow."

The doctor did not guess what she meant, and after his visit to Nannie and her mother, rode away, while Marguerite went to her room, and taking from her trunk the box in which her jewels were kept, carried it down stairs where no one could see her, and began to examine its contents.

"I wonder I never thought of this before," she said, as she took out one costly ornament after

another, and laid them upon the table, exulting over them, because in them lay help and comfort for Nannie, and her mother, and her father and Jack.

She didn't care for herself, or how tired she was; it was for the rest she thought; and here was a little fortune, if she could only dispose of the stones for half of what they were worth. Her mother's diamonds had been sold to defray the expenses of the funeral and the hotel, but she had kept hers, and until now had never looked at them since the day she locked them up as something belonging to the past.

"I didn't know there were so many," she said, as she took up one after another, and remembered with a throb of pain just when and where it was bought, and where she had first worn it.

Over the diamond butterfly, half hidden in a cluster of slender gold leaves, she lingered lovingly, for this had been her mother's last gift, and she had first worn it at the Marquis's ball, where she had met Dr. Catheron, and danced so many times with Harry, who had told her how pretty it was, but had said that her bracelets were too heavy for a young girl like her. She knew they were herself, and knew, too, that she had too many diamonds. But Mrs. Rathburn, who was very fond of jewelry, was always buying them for her, and she was glad now that she had them. There was a pin, bar-shaped, with three stones of the finest water, and a pair of solitaires, large and white and clear—a diamond cross, an arrow, which she had used for pinning lace, and three finger rings, one a single stone, the other a cluster of diamonds, and the third an

emerald set around with diamonds and rubies. Once, when she had objected to so great an expenditure, for she had some of Nannie's economy in her nature, her mother had said to her, that in a business point of view diamonds were a good investment and would always sell for ten per cent. less than their original cost. Was this true, she wondered, and if so, she must have quite a fortune. With all her extravagance, Mrs. Rathburn had always kept an account of her own and Marguerite's expenses, and the book in which her's were recorded was still in her possession, and going again to her trunk, she took out the little black leather bound volume, on the fly leaf of which was written in her mother's hand, "Marguerite's Expenses."

Marguerite did not dare add up the sum total, lest the amount should appall her, but she found the diamonds, with the price paid for them, and was astonished to see how much they had cost.

"We shall be rich," she said, repeating over and over the amount, after the ten per cent. was deducted, and wondering if Dr. Catheron would help her.

The next morning after he had made his visit to Nannie and her mother, she took him into the sitting-room, and opening her jewel box, showed him its contents.

"All these mamma bought for me, a young girl, who surely didn't need so many," she said, "but I am glad I have them, for I am going to sell them and get the money we need."

Dr. Catheron glanced first at the diamonds and

then at Marguerite, whose eyes, swimming in tears, were almost as bright as the stones themselves.

"Oh, I wouldn't," he said, "you'll want them sometime."

"Never," Marguerite answered sadly. "What have I to do with diamonds in Rocky Point?"

"But when you are married?" the doctor suggested, looking curiously at her, while she answered quickly, "That may never be, and really I don't care for them, and never did except as it pleased mamma and others to see me wear them."

"I remember the butterfly. You had it in your hair the first time I saw you, and I thought it very becoming," the doctor said, taking up the pretty bauble, which quivered on the slender spray.

Involuntarily Marguerite closed the box which held the butterfly, with the thought that she would keep that for a time at least, but the rest must go.

"Do you think you could help me dispose of them?" she asked, and with a peculiar look in his eyes the doctor replied, "If you are really in earnest I know a man who will take them and pay a good price for them. I will negotiate for you, if you like, but I wouldn't sell them all now. Suppose we try this first. How much did it cost?" and he took up the arrow studded with small diamonds, and for which Marguerite found by reference to her book one hundred dollars had been paid at Tiffany's in Paris.

"At ten per cent. discount you ought to get ninety dollars. Will that satisfy you?" the doctor asked, and Marguerite replied, "Oh, yes, ninety dollars

will go ever so far, and I can never thank you enough for your kindness."

Her face was all aglow with the joy she felt at being able to help her family, to which she had so long been a burden, and Dr. Catheron carried the image of it with him all the wintry day during which he was visiting the many patients to whom La Grippe was paying its respects. It was not until the morning of the third day that he came again to the farm-house, where Marguerite greeted him with the sunny smile that always made his heart beat so fast.

"Have you heard from the broker?" she asked, and he answered by taking from his purse nine crisp ten dollar bills, while he said hurriedly and without looking at her, "Just ten per cent. discount on the original price, you see. I think I drove a pretty good bargain with old Skinflint. Don't you?"

"Oh, I'm so glad," Marguerite cried, as her fingers fluttered among the bills. "I didn't think you could get so much, and you have been so quick about it, too. You had to send the arrow to New York for him to see it, of course?"

"He saw it, and was satisfied. I believe he thinks he has a good bargain," the doctor said, and then turned the conversation by saying, "One word now about the girl. As Mrs. Catheron is staying in New York, I shall be alone the rest of the winter, and five or six servants are not necessary to take care of one man. The cook's daughter, Maria, used to be our waitress until Mrs. Catheron introduced the colored butler. Since that time her mother has been training Maria for a cook, and says she is a very

good one. I have been talking with her, and she is willing to come here for a time if you like. I think you'd better take her."

Marguerite could hardly express her thanks in words, but her face expressed it for her, and the doctor's heart was lighter that afternoon as he rode home than it had been before since Alice died. That night when Mr. Rathburn and Jack were at supper, Marguerite told them what she had done, and giving the money to her father, said, "Now, we can have everything, for when this is gone there is more where it came from. Old Skinflint, as the doctor calls him, will perhaps take all the diamonds at the same rate, and Nannie will get well, and the bills will be paid, and Jack can have some skates, and father the overcoat which he needs so much."

Mr. Rathburn could scarcely speak at first. His poverty had pressed so hard upon him this winter, when he needed money so badly, that he had sometimes felt as if he could not bear it, and many were the directions in which he had looked for help, but never to this daughter, who had seemed so helpless and useless, but who had risen to the emergency so grandly. As we have said before, he was a man of but few words, but his "God bless you, child. You don't know how much you have eased my mind," were worth more to Marguerite than a whole volume would have been, spoken under ordinary circumstances. As for Jack, he was silent for a moment, trying to masticate the fried cake which he had crammed into his mouth. He had wanted a pair of skates so much, for there was rare sport on the pond where the boys congregated every night, but as

skates were out of the question, he had contented himself with riding down hill and out upon the ice as far as possible on a sled improvised from an old chair back, which the boys called a go-giggle, as they whirled around him in circles, and then darted swiftly away, while he looked after them with longing eyes, knowing that, give him a chance, he could beat the best of them. And now he was to have his chance, and after disposing of his fried cake, he said, "Margret, you're a brick, and no mistake, and the doctor is another. But didn't you hate to give up the stones, and what an awful lot of money to pay for them. Why, I bought a diamond pin for Nan at the circus for less than a quarter, not real of course, but it looked just as well, though Nan never would wear it. She hates shams."

The next day Maria, from the Pines, took possession of the kitchen, bringing with her Miss Parloa, and Mrs. Rorer, and Marian Harland, and discarding Catharine Beecher as a fossil to be laid upon the shelf. Mr. Rathburn, at Marguerite's entreaties, went to town and looked at an overcoat, while on the pond that night, where at least thirty boys were assembled, there was no one happier than Jack, who, on his new skates, performed the most astonishing feats for a beginner. In the course of a few days order and comfort reigned in the kitchen, and Marguerite was regaining her color and strength, when an unexpected event occurred, which threw her off her balance entirely and upset the household generally.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A GUEST AT THE FARM-HOUSE.

It was the second week in January, and a much wilder storm than the December one had been was sweeping over the New England hills, and covering the ground with snow to the depth of two feet or more. It was quite dark by half-past four, and Maria had lighted a lamp in the kitchen, where Marguerite was giving her some directions with regard to supper, when she heard a great stamping outside. Thinking it was Jack coming from school, Marguerite hastened to open the door, admitting a gust of wind which extinguished the lamp and filled her face so full of snow that before she knew what she was doing she found herself in the arms of a tall young man, who was kissing her and calling her Madge in Harry Bellamy's familiar voice.

"Why, Harry," she almost screamed, as she freed herself from him. "How you frightened me, and where did you come from?"

"From New York, of course," he said, as he closed the door, and began to shake from his fur overcoat and cap a whole bank of snow. "The train was late," he continued, "and when I reached the station, I couldn't hire even a wheelbarrow to bring me here, and so I had to walk through this awful storm. My, but isn't it a blizzard? You will have to keep me over night. The Mountain House, you know, is shut up, and I haven't much faith in any

thing that Rocky Point can offer. I hope you are glad to see me. How is Nannie?"

He had taken her so by surprise and talked so fast, and thrown so much snow in every direction, as he divested himself of his cap and coat, which he hung upon a hook in the corner, with the air of one feeling quite at home and sure of a welcome, that for a moment Marguerite could not speak. His announcement that he had come to spend the night was rather appalling, for although the house was large and there were several upper rooms, none of them were more than half furnished, except hers and Jack's and the one which Nannie had occupied before her illness. To put him in this last seemed impossible, it was so cold and comfortless. Still it could be done, and by the time he had seated himself by the stove, with his feet, which, he said, were like lumps of ice, in the oven, she was quite herself, and told him he was welcome to stay, if he were willing to sleep in a room with the thermometer at zero.

"We haven't furnaces and gas in the country, you know, but we will try to make you comfortable," she said, and then he asked again for Nannie, anxiety for whom had been the real motive of his visit.

He had been spending the winter in New York much as he had spent other winters, attending parties and receptions and theatres and the opera, with an occasional attempt to find something to do, which attempts had generally been made after the receipt of one of Nannie's letters urging him to exertion of some kind. But with her illness her

letters had ceased, and Marguerite's had been short and unsatisfactory. In one written when the disease was at its worst, she had said, "Nannie is very ill. Oh, what if she should die!" The words had swam before Harry's eyes all day long, and when that evening he went to the opera with his mother and Lucy Grady he heard but little of the music so constantly were his thoughts with Nannie.

"What if she should die!" he kept repeating to himself, with a feeling that with her death something which had become very necessary to him would be gone from his life, and at last, when he could bear the suspense no longer, he resolved to go to Rocky Point and see for himself how it fared with the little girl and Marguerite.

As his mother was in Washington there was no one to oppose him, and Lucy, when he told her of his intention, rather urged his going than otherwise, and only asked where he would stay, as the Mountain House was closed. "Oh, I'll find some nook," he said, as he bade her good-bye, and with his portmanteau in hand started for the train. He knew it was not just the thing for him to intrude himself upon the inmates of the farm-house for the night, "but I'll do it just for once, and Madge will surely be glad to see me," he thought, as he trudged through the snow, which came nearly to the top of his boots. And after a little Marguerite was glad to see him, he was so sunny and genial, and brought her news of the world which had once been hers. And then he was so anxious about Nannie, who was better, although still very weak and scarcely able to help herself.

"Can I see her?" he asked, and Marguerite replied, "She is sleeping now, and I shouldn't like to wake her, but after supper I will tell her you are here. There's father now, and Jack," and she hurried to the door, admitting two more white figures and two more banks of snow.

They were naturally surprised to see Harry, but he greeted them with so much warmth and familiarity that Marguerite began to feel as one does in a cold room when a bright fire is first introduced into it. He was very talkative during the supper, which he ate with a keen relish of recent exercise and perfect health, and when it was over he paid his respects to Mrs. Rathburn with as much deference as if she had been a queen, asking how her writing was getting along, and telling her that he was always looking for some article over the name of *Senga*. Then bidding her good-night he followed Marguerite to Nannie's room. She had been told that he was there, and that he was to spend the night, and weak as she was her first thought was for his comfort and what could be done to lessen the cold in the room he was to occupy.

"I never used to mind it," she said, "but he isn't accustomed to it. Tell Maria to fill the hot water bag and give him a soap stone; that will help some."

Marguerite laughed at the idea of a big fellow like Harry Bellamy needing a hot water bag and a soap stone, but she only kissed Nannie, and then went to Harry, saying, "You mustn't talk to her much, for she tires easily."

Harry knew Nannie had been very ill, but he

was not prepared for the wasted face and the great sunken eyes which looked up at him as he came in. He was naturally very tender hearted, and could never read a death bed scene, or look upon distress of any kind without the tears springing to his eyes. The sight of Nannie unmanned him for a moment; then, with a great effort he forced back his tears, and steadying his voice, as he took in his the hand she tried so feebly to raise, said, "I never dreamed you were so ill, or I should have come before. You look like a little picked robin."

Nannie only smiled at this, but she let her hand lie in his, while she told him how glad she was to see him, and that she was much better, and then startled him by asking, not if he had found anything to do, but what he was doing?

"By Jove," he said, with a laugh. "You must be getting well, but to tell you the truth, I'm still waiting for something to turn up."

Nannie's face clouded at once, and as Marguerite had left the room she said, with more energy than she had spoken before, "I'm disappointed in you, Harry Bellamy. Here it is January, and you nothing to do yet. Don't you expect Marguerite will keep her word?"

Harry didn't quite know what he did expect, except that he should marry Marguerite, and his mother would relent and take them home, and he should go on just as he was going. But he couldn't say this to Nannie, and it hurt him a little that she should be disappointed in him, and so he said to her, "I'm really going to make an effort in the

spring. If I can do nothing better, I'll apply for a clerkship at the Mountain House when it opens, or if that fails me, I'll hire out with your father and board here. I can help you flute things, you know."

This made Nannie laugh, and as by that time Marguerite had returned, the conversation respecting Harry's future ceased, and he soon went down stairs to visit with Mr. Rathburn and Jack, both of whom found him so agreeable and entertaining that they sat up long past their usual bed-time, although Harry thought it very early when he at last said good-night and went to his room, which, in spite of the oil stove, which, at Nannie's suggestion, had been burning there all the evening, seemed to him like the frigid zone. But notwithstanding the intense cold, which froze the ice in his pitcher and covered the window panes with a thick coating of frost, he slept soundly and only wakened once to hear Nannie coughing in the next room, and Marguerite speaking to her. Then that ceased, and he fell asleep again, and when he awoke, the sun was shining into the room, and he saw by his watch that it was nearly nine o'clock.

"Great guns!" he exclaimed, as he sprang out of bed and began to lift first one foot and then the other from the cold floor, "what a lout they must think me. I dare say they have been up two hours. Farmers' people are always stumbling around in the dark."

Then he broke the ice and began to wash himself, his teeth chattering and his fingers so numb

that he could scarcely hold his brush or button his boots.

"This *is* a jolly go," he said. "I wonder what mother would say if she knew where I was, or what I should have said six months ago if one had told me that I would voluntarily give up my comfortable quarters in New York, and spend a night in such a room as this. But love will work wonders, and I suppose I am in love. Zounds! how Nannie did cough last night, and how sorry I was for her. There she goes again," he continued, as he heard Nannie in a paroxysm of coughing much more severe than that of the previous night. "Oh, if I only could help her," he said, and so great was his sympathy and excitement that he forgot the cold, and was all in a glow when he went down-stairs, where Marguerite was waiting for him.

"Father and Jack have had their breakfast, and as Maria has so much to do this morning I have excused her," Marguerite said, as she took her seat opposite him and began to pour his coffee.

"All right," he answered cheerfully. "I'd rather be alone with you. I say, Madge, this is rather cozy, isn't it, and just as we shall live when we are married."

"I suppose so," Marguerite said rather faintly, while Harry continued, "Seems to me you don't enthuse as much as you ought to. You are not afraid of being poor with me, are you?"

"Not at all," Marguerite replied, and then began to talk upon indifferent topics until breakfast was over.

There was a short call upon *Senga*, and then

Harry went again to see Nannie, who seemed and looked better.

"Your coming has done me good," she said. "See," and she lifted up her hands to show how much more strength she had.

"I'm glad of it," Harry replied, sitting down beside her. "I'm glad somebody is pleased, for Madge doesn't seem to be hurting herself with delight. What is the matter, Nannie?"

Nannie had noticed the same thing of which Harry complained, and wondered at it. But she hastened to say, "Oh, she is glad, but I suppose it is because she is so dignified that she doesn't show it more, and then she is very tired, for before Maria came she did all the work and took care of me, too."

"Marguerite did the work!" Harry repeated. "Marguerite working in the kitchen like a common servant?"

"Yes," Nannie answered sadly. "You see I couldn't do it. I'm very sorry," and in her eyes there was a look which checked the young man's impatience and brought him to his senses.

If this frail slip of a girl could work, as he knew she had done, why shouldn't Marguerite? he asked himself, with a vague idea that there were a great many things yet in the world for him to learn.

"I wish I could do something for you that would relieve Marguerite," he said. "Is there nothing you can suggest?"

"Yes," Nannie answered, looking over towards the table, where her Prayer Book was lying. "You might read me the Collect for next Sunday, and the Gospel and the Epistle. Marguerite always

does that, but she has a sore throat this morning, and you will be helping her by sparing her voice."

Harry was not very familiar with the Prayer Book on week days, and he hadn't the faintest idea where to find the second Sunday after the Epiphany, but he answered with great alacrity, "Certainly, certainly," as he brought the book and began to turn the leaves nervously, thinking to himself, "Where the deuce is the Epiphany? I hope she won't ask me what it means, for I am sure I don't know, though I believe it has something to do with the moon, or some of the planets." He found the place at last and was just beginning the collect when Nannie startled him by saying, "Marguerite always says the Lord's Prayer with me first. Would you mind doing it?"

"Oh," Harry gasped inwardly, while he felt the perspiration oozing out at the roots of his hair.

He had not said the Lord's Prayer in years except in church, where it was with him a mere matter of form, and not at all like what it would be to say it with Nannie. But there was no help for it; he had offered to do something, and he would go through with all the collects and prayers in the book if she desired it, and he was trying to get himself into the right frame of mind, when he heard Dr. Catheron coming up the stairs, and was thus saved from the hardest task ever imposed upon him. Dr. Catheron had heard from Marguerite that Harry was there, and the intelligence had not been altogether pleasing. Still Marguerite did not seem to be very much elated, and that was a grain of comfort to him as he went up to the room, where he

found the young man with the Prayer Book in his hands and a look upon his face as if he had been caught in some act not quite respectable. The greeting between them was cordial, although neither cared particularly for the other, and while shaking hands the doctor was wondering how long Harry meant to stay, and Harry was wondering if the doctor came there every day. But after sitting awhile and watching Harry as he once or twice bent over Nannie and asked her some question and put a lock of her hair behind her ears, there came to him suddenly a thought which was almost a conviction, and quite changed his mind with regard to Harry and his visit to the farm-house. Under the influence of this change he became very social, and when Harry asked him what kind of accommodations he could probably find at the crow's nest of a hotel in Rocky Point, adding that as New York was horribly dull he intended stopping awhile in the neighborhood until Nannie was better, he answered, "I don't think you will find the hotel a very cheerful place, but if you like, you can come to the Pines. As Mrs. Catheron is South this winter, I am all alone, and shall be very glad of your society. You know, of course, that I am absent a great deal, and you may be rather lonely."

"Not at all," Harry said, "for I shall come here every day to see Nannie, who pays me the compliment of saying that I have done her good already."

Nannie's face was a sufficient index of what she thought of the arrangement, and it was settled that when the doctor went home, Harry should go with him and stay at the Pines for as long a time as he

chose. What Marguerite thought it was difficult to guess. She certainly did not seem to be greatly overjoyed, but she always met Harry with a smile and held up her face to be kissed, and then went with him to Nannie, to whom he read collect after collect, and gospel after gospel, until he not only knew where to find the second Sunday after the Epiphany, but the third, and the fourth, and so on, and became very familiar with all the saint's days in the calendar, wondering that there were so many, and why Nannie should care so much about them. Sometimes he read to her bits of poetry, or whatever he thought would suit her, and as he had a very clear, musical voice, and was an uncommonly fine reader, Nannie could listen to him an hour or more without fatigue, and when she fell asleep Harry would sit and watch her, with a strange stirring at his heart for which he could not account. And while the stirring, and the watching, and the reading went on, the doctor frequently took Marguerite for a drive in his gay cutter with Nero in front of it. She needed exercise, he said, and he took her many a mile into the country and over the hills, and when he brought her back and set her down upon the door-step, beautiful and glowing with the fresh air and excitement, he used to linger a few moments and look into her eyes, wondering if there was nothing in his own which told her how much she was to him. Her engagement with Harry troubled him very little now, and the less it troubled him, the more courteous he grew to the young man, and the more he urged him to prolong his visit. Sometimes in the evening they played billiards or chess

together, or talked of the many places abroad which both had visited. But when it came to books Harry was stranded at once. He had never read anything very solid, he said, and had only given his attention to light literature, of which he was very fond, adding ,with a laugh, "Just now I am reading the Prayer Book through to Nannie. Jack calls me her private chaplain. It is astonishing how she likes that sort of thing. I believe women take to religion naturally."

Of Marguerite they seldom spoke except in a general way, but they talked a good of Nannie, whose case puzzled and perplexed the doctor.

"She needs an entire change of scene and air," he said one day to Marguerite, to whom he suggested Colorado, where many wonderful cures had been made, and where, he believed, Nannie would get well.

"But it's a long way off," Marguerite said, "and will cost a great of money, for of course I must go with her." Then she added quickly, "But I have the rest of the diamonds, you know. Do you think old Skinflint will buy them as he did the arrow?"

"I'm sure of it," the doctor replied. "At all events I will try him. Can you tell me their original cost?"

Marguerite could by reference to the book, and she soon brought him the box of jewelry and a slip of paper with the cost of each article upon it. As this was a much larger sale than the arrow had been, it would take a few days to complete it, and he might possibly go to New York and interview old Skinflint personally, the doctor said, as he arose to

go, while Marguerite detained him a moment to say, "I'd rather Harry shouldn't know about the diamonds."

"Of course not. Why should he?" the doctor replied, as he said good-bye again and went away

This was Harry's last day in the neighborhood for his mother, who had returned from Washington, had written him so many times bidding him come home, that he finally decided to obey her.

"I don't want to go at all," he said to Marguerite the next morning, when he came to say good-bye, and with a hand upon either of her shoulders stood gazing at her, with a look of trouble upon his face.

He didn't know what to make of her, she had been so quiet and reserved of late, and had seemed trying to keep out of his way. And as the object we are losing, always appears more valuable than when we are sure of it, so, for the time being, Marguerite in this new light was dearer to him than ever.

"Madge," he said, "you will keep your promise? You will marry me at the end of the year?

"If you fulfill the conditions, I shall keep my promise," Marguerite replied, while Harry grew more puzzled than ever.

She was queer, he thought, and not at all like the girl from whom he had parted on ship-board not a year ago, and he wondered what ailed her, and then went to Nannie, who made up for all Marguerite's coldness and reserve.

"I shall miss you terribly," she said, "and so will Marguerite. But of course you must go and see about that business. Here it is the third week in

February and you have only about six months more."

"Confound the business," Harry answered, a little petulantly, while Nannie looked wonderingly at him as he went on. "Do you really think Marguerite will go back on a fellow if I don't find something to do?"

"I think she will. She said she would," Nannie replied, and Harry continued, "Would you do it, if you were in love with a chap, say with me?"

For a moment Nannie was silent, while she debated the question. Then, with a wondrous light in her eyes she answered without the slightest hesitancy, "Oh, that would be very different. You and I could live on a great deal less than you and Marguerite, and if anything happened, I could take care of us both. Don't you see?"

Harry did see a glimmer of something which troubled almost as much as it comforted him. Laying his great hand on Nannie's forehead, he said, "Nannie, if anything should come between Marguerite and me, as I sometimes fear there will, I shall always be glad that I have known you. I am a better man for it. God bless you. Good-bye."

He would have liked to have kissed the little face which looked up so sorrowfully at him, but she was not his sister yet, and his kisses were reserved for Marguerite, who bade him farewell in the same impassive manner which had of late been habitual to her.

"What the deuce is the matter?" he said to himself, as he sat in the car thinking over all the incidents of his stay at Rocky Point.

Then suddenly, as if struck with a bombshell, he sprang up and began to walk up and down the isle, greatly to the surprise of the passengers, who wondered if he were crazy.

"I guess I'll go and smoke," he thought at last. "That may clear my brain," and going to the smoking-car, he staid there until the train pulled into the station at New York, where his mother was waiting for him.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DIFFERENT MATTERS.

It was very lonely at the farm-house without Harry, for he had made himself generally popular in the family. Every day he had called upon Mrs. Rathburn, sometimes reading poetry to her and sometimes copying her poems, two of which at her request he sent to a New York editor, who, for any merit there was in them, would never have looked at them, but the remuneration which Harry offered availed to find an obscure place in the columns of the paper, and for months Mrs. Rathburn was happier because the name of *Senga* had appeared in a New York journal. She had suggested to Harry that she should sign herself Mrs. John Rathburn, as that might reflect more credit on the family name than *Senga*, which gave the reading public no idea as to her identity. But Harry answered with some dismay in his voice, "Oh, no, stick to *Senga*, the *nom-de-plume* by which you have earned your fame."

Harry had made a fast friend of Jack, who, after he was gone, said to Marguerite, "He's the tallest kind of a nice fellow, and uses almost as much slang as I do. I shall miss him awfully."

They had skated together on the pond and on the river, and had driven in the old-fashioned sleigh behind Pedler through the woods and over the hills, while Jack had confided to him his love for horses and his great desire to own a racer. And Harry had made a note of it, and resolved that the boy should have a racer if his Tacoma property ever became valuable. They had talked, too, of the Pyramids, and the Sphinx, and the Nile, which Jack wished so much to see. And Harry had made a note of that, also, and promised himself that when the something which he was waiting for turned up, Jack should see the Nile, and the Sphinx, and the Pyramids, and Nannie should be with them, too, and he made in his own mind a very pretty picture of the quartette of which Marguerite was the central figure, standing on the top of Cheops, where he had once stood with her and kissed her before the Arab guide, Shahatta. At Jack's request he had been to the barn to see old Brindle, over whom he tried to get enthusiastic because Marguerite had ridden on his back, but as he was not fond of oxen, Brindle was a failure. Tom, however, was a great success, and when the cat was not lying on Nannie's bed, his usual resting place during the day, he was either in Harry's lap, or rolling and scratching at his feet, to the great detriment of his patent leather shoes.

Even Mr. Rathburn, who talked so little, had thawed under Harry's heartiness of manner, and

when Jack lamented his going, saying that the house was like a grave-yard without him, he answered, "Yes, he was very chipper, and we shall be pretty lonesome a spell, but I think it is time he was attending to his business. A man ought to be doing something better than nursing a sick girl."

"He didn't nurse her," Jack replied, ready to defend his friend. "He only gave her a drink once in a while, and the rest of the time he was reading the Prayer Book to her, or Scott's novels, over which she usually went to sleep, but I tell you she was wide awake when he was at the Gospels and the Psalms. Nan is great on them, and she got Harry so he could say the Lord's Prayer like a priest. Nan will miss him, you bet!"

To this Mr. Rathburn made no reply. Although so quiet he saw a great deal more than he seemed to see, and something in the nursing, as he called it, and the reading of the Bible, and Scott's novels, and poetry had disturbed him, especially as he associated it with Marguerite's taciturnity and reserve, so unlike herself, and, much as he liked Harry, he was not sorry to have him leave, nor did Marguerite seem very sorry, and after he was gone she went singing about the house, as she had not done for days, and as the sound of the singing came up to Nannie's room, she said, "I wonder what makes Marguerite act as if she were glad that Harry is gone? Can it be she doesn't care for him as she did? That would be mean, and I shall speak to Dr. Catheron, and see if he can't do something by praising Harry to her." With this thought in her mind, Nannie began to look forward eagerly for the

doctor's visit, but it was three days before she saw him, as he had been to New York, where he had some business.

Marguerite was alone in the dining-room when at last he came, and her eyes asked the question which he answered at once.

"Yes," he said, "I found old Skinflint quite as ready to take the diamonds at ten per cent. discount as he was the arrow, and I believe he would have given the original price if I had asked it. I wish I had," and he handed the roll of bills, which was to take Nannie to Colorado and possibly save her life.

"Oh, Dr. Catheron!" Marguerite said, as she counted the money, so much more than she had expected. "How can I ever thank you enough, and what a nice old man this Skinflint must be! What did you say his real name was? It seems so disrespectful to be calling him Skinflint!"

The doctor pretended not to hear her, and began to inquire for Nannie.

"I don't think her quite as well since Harry went away. She is very homesick for him," Marguerite said.

"I dare say," the doctor replied, looking searchingly at Marguerite, "and I believe he is quite as homesick for her, or for somebody. I met him in the street, and he insisted upon my dining with him, after which we went to the opera, but he seemed pre-occupied and absent-minded, and not at all like the light-hearted fellow he was here."

To this Marguerite made no answer, but went with him to Nannie's room, where she left him, as her mother needed her. Nannie had intended

speaking to him at once of what was weighing upon her mind, but when he told her that he had seen Harry and dined with him, she forgot it for a time, and plied him with questions concerning the dinner, and how Harry looked and if he talked much of Marguerite.

"Not half as much as he did of you," the doctor said, with a meaning in his tone which was lost on Nannie, who now took her opportunity and began to tell him what she wished him to do.

"I don't know what has happened, or whether they have quarreled or not, but Marguerite has been queer a good deal of the time, and didn't seem a bit sorry when Harry left her, and within an hour she was singing:

> 'There's a brightness in the sunshine,
> For the night has passed away.'

Do you think a girl, who was very sorry that her lover was gone, would be singing like that in less than an hour?"

The doctor was decidedly of the opinion that she wouldn't, and Nannie went on: "That's just it, and I don't know what to make of her, and when I spoke to her about it, she laughed and called me a little goose. Now I want you to do something."

"Do what!" the doctor asked, and Nannie replied, "You think Harry a very nice man, don't you?"

"Certainly I do."

"And he hasn't any bad habits, has he?"

"None, unless you call smoking one."

"Well, yes," Nannie said hesitatingly. "Father chews, you know, and I suppose smoking is pretty bad, and I hate the smell of Sallie Marsh's pipe, but Harry's cigars are different, and I didn't mind them at all."

The smoking question being thus disposed of Nannie went on: "You believe he will make Marguerite happy, don't you?"

This was a hard question, but the doctor was equal to it, and answered promptly, "I think his wife, when he gets one, will be very happy with him."

"I know she will," and Nannie gave a little nod of satisfaction, and then continued: "Marguerite thinks a great deal of you and your opinion, and if you praise Harry, without letting her know that I told you to do it, and tell her what a fine man he is, and how fortunate any girl would be to get him for a husband, it will make a great difference with her. Will you do it?"

It was well for the doctor that Marguerite at this moment came into the room and saved him from a promise he would have been loath to keep. It was time now for them to speak of Colorado, which Nannie opposed at first. She was growing better all the time, she said, and she couldn't leave home and go so far away, for what would they do without her and Marguerite, and where was the money to come from. It seemed necessary at least to tell her the whole truth, and this task Marguerite left for the doctor, who, as cautiously as possible, told her about the diamonds and the sum they had brought, adding, as he saw the look of dismay on

Nannie's face, "Don't be so distressed. Marguerite could not wear them here, and I have so arranged it that they can be redeemed. Such things are done every day."

"Yes, I know, and Harry will redeem them, too, if he is ever able to raise so much money," Nannie said, while the tears rolled down her cheeks at this proof of love from her sister.

Allie had once said to her, "Some great good will come to you through Marguerite," and it had been coming since the day when she first saw her at the gate and felt her kisses on her lips.

"Is it necessary for me to go? Can't I get well unless I do?" she asked, and the doctor answered by telling her that La Grippe had left her with germs of a disease which if she stayed at home might develop into serious trouble, but which in Colorado would probably be obviated.

"Then I will go," Nannie said, and the journey was fixed for the middle of March, by which time the doctor thought she would be able to bear it.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

COLORADO.

On a bright morning about the middle of March, Dr. Catheron's carriage stood before the farm-house waiting to take Marguerite and Nannie to the station. Mrs. Rathburn, who had not been quite in favor of a plan which would leave her alone, was in

a state of hysterics which required all her husband's skill to manage, and when he heard footsteps on the stairs and knew that Nannie was coming down, with Dr. Catheron and Marguerite supporting her, he said to Jack, "Tell them not to come in here; it will only make matters worse for us all. Give them your mother's good-bye and mine and say, God bless them and bring them safely back."

Jack's eyes were very red, but he tried to put on a brave front, and when the trio were in the sitting-room, he went to them and with some joking remark to Nannie about her looking like a little mummy, he said, "Father wants me to tell you not to come in there for fear mother will go off into another fit. She is just awful, and father is holding the hartshorn and Maria the camphor to her nose. He says, Tell you good-bye and God bless you and bring you safely back."

Jack's voice shook and his chin quivered a little, for with Marguerite and Nannie away he felt that all the joy of his life would be gone, while added to this was the terrible thought, "What if Nannie should never come back again?" She looked so thin and shriveled that this seemed very possible, and Jack's heart ached to its core, as with a boy's contrition, he remembered the many times he had annoyed her with his slang and bad grammar, and worried her by teasing Tom, who, with the sagacity which animals sometimes evince, seemed to know that something was wrong, and was in everybody's way and under everybody's feet.

"I shall be good to Tom, and I'll quit slang and try to learn some manners," Jack said to himself,

and then as Nannie, who had sat down to rest a moment, rose to her feet, he went up to her, and putting his arm around her said, "Let me help you."

"Thank you, Jack," Nannie answered, in a voice so sweet that Jack was nearly upset and winked hard to keep his tears back, as he thought that this might be the last thing he could ever do for her.

And all the way to the gate he was haunted with the vision of a little coffin being brought up the walk, with Nannie in it, dead and gone forever. When she was in the carriage with Marguerite and Dr. Catheron, Jack mounted the box with Michael, from whom he took the reins, saying he would like to drive the horses, and hoping, in this way, to fight down the lump which was swelling in his throat.

"I'm not going to cry and make a baby of myself," he thought, and when they reached the station, instead of going inside, he kept close to Dr. Catheron, as he busied himself with tickets and checks for the baggage, and when the train came round the curve in the distance, he touched the doctor's arm and said, "It's no use. I can never stand it to go in there, for I should blubber right out and upset Nan. So you say good-bye for me and that will make it right. Tell Nan I'm going to reform."

When the train reached the station, Jack was over the hill and out of sight, but could one have followed him behind a ledge of rocks just off from the road, he would have seen him leaning against a butternut tree and crying as boys of fourteen never cry except when their hearts are sorely wrung.

Meanwhile Dr. Catheron had taken Nannie into the car, and seen that she was made comfortable

with cushions and pillows and wraps, a process which took so long that the train started before he was through, and both Marguerite and Nannie cried in alarm, "Hurry, Dr. Catheron, or you will be carried off with us,"

"That's just what I intend to do," the doctor replied, seating himself by Nannie. "I am going with you to Albany to see you into the sleeper, which you will not leave until you reach Chicago."

This thoughtful act lifted a load from Marguerite, who chatted very gaily in order to keep up Nannie's spirits, until Albany was reached. There they found the New York train, and took possession of two whole sections, which had been engaged for them, and in one of which a bed was already made for Nannie, who, as she sank down upon the hair mattress and soft pillows, exclaimed, "Oh, this is so nice. I didn't know they had things so comfortable on the cars."

Marguerite, who understood the secret of the hair mattress and soft pillows, could only look her gratitude to the doctor, who felt that her bright smile was a sufficient remuneration for what he had done.

"There, we have started again," she cried, as the train began to move, and laying her hand upon his arm she tried to push him towards the door. But the doctor took the seat in the section next to hers and said, "I am going to Chicago. Did you think I could let you go alone?"

"Oh, Dr. Catheron," Marguerite exclaimed, "you have made me so happy; but what will your patients do without you?"

"The few I have at present will do very well," the doctor said. "It is distressingly healthy in Rocky Point and Millville just now, and I shall not be missed, so don't thank me too much, for I am quite as glad to go as you are to have me, and," he added with a smile, "I may as well tell you now as later, that I expect to go all the way to Denver, or wherever you may think best to stay."

Marguerite could not speak at first, but her eyes, in which the tears were shining, told what she felt. It was such a joy and a relief to have him with her, thinking of everything and doing everything, and caring so tenderly for Nannie, who slept nearly all the way to Chicago, where the last change was made, and they went speeding away towards the far western world. It had been the doctor's intention to leave them at Denver, but Nannie, who seemed to improve with every hour, did not like the city. The noise and confusion hurt her head, she said, and after a few days' rest they went on to Colorado Springs, with which both Marguerite and Nannie were delighted.

"This is the spot," Nannie said. "I shall get well here, for old Pike's Peak, looking at me when I go to sleep at night and bidding me good-morning when I awake, will remind me of the mountains at home, only it is so much taller and grander."

The best available rooms were engaged for them at the Antlers, while every chambermaid and waiter and employe in the establishment was interested in their behalf by means which seldom fail, for filthy lucre wields a mighty power. And when he saw them settled and as comfortable as money and fore-

thought could make them in a suite which looked out upon the foothills and mountains, Dr. Catheron bade them good-bye and started for home.

It was very lonely for the first few days in the great hotel, where all were strangers, but very soon every one became interested in the sisters, and when Nannie went down to the hall or parlor she held quite a little court, each member of which vied with the other in attentions to her, and to Marguerite, whose statuesque beauty was the theme of conversation among the male guests of the house. How lovely it was there when the June days came, and from the windows of their room Marguerite and Nannie watched the crisp grass on the hills growing green in the warm sunshine, and the snow melting gradually from the rocky sides of Pike's Peak and Cheyenne, and saw the purple and rosy tinted haze which rested on the mountain top over which the white, misty clouds were floating so airily. It was a pleasure, too, to watch the many trains as they came and went, laden with passengers, some westward bound and others to the east toward Rocky Point and home and Dr. Catheron, and Harry, Nannie used to say to Marguerite, who was always with her, nursing her so carefully that under the influence of the nursing and the bracing air, she improved rapidly, and the letters which went twice a week to the farm-house were full of comfort and hope for the future. Once a week Marguerite wrote to Harry, but always with a feeling that her letters were a failure, although Harry made no complaint, and sent her in return ten or twelve pages, in which there was a great deal about Nannie. Occasionally Dr. Catheron

wrote to Nannie, whom he addressed as "My dear little girl," words which Marguerite often repeated to herself. "My dear little girl," she would say, "Yes, she is unquestionably his dear little girl in every sense, and I am Harry's dear big girl, I suppose. Well, the world seems upside down, but, God helping me, I shall keep my promise, if he fulfills the condition and insists upon it."

Twice every week they heard from home, sometimes from Mrs. Rathburn and sometimes from Jack, whose productions were very characteristic of the boy, and gave his sisters vivid pictures of life at the farm-house.

In one of his letters he wrote:

"It is as lonesome as the grave, and mother cries a good deal, and scribbles a good deal, and father looks as if he had lost every friend he had, while Tom! well, you ought to see how the cat goes on. Every day for a week after you went away he used to go up to the room where Nan was sick, and hunt for her, on the bed, and under the bed, and behind the screen, and when he couldn't find her, he looked up in my face and mewed so pitifully that if I'd been a weak sister like Nan, I should have slopped over, but being a boy I found one of Nan's old skirts and put it in a basket by the door of her room, and there he sleeps every night and half the day time, too.

"I told the doctor to tell you I was going to reform, but I don't think I've made much headway as far as slang is concerned, though I did try for a spell and then back-slid, and am just as bad as ever, but I'm getting to be great on manners, and know how to bow and scrape and enter a room and tip my hat like the swells at the Mountain House. You see I'm going to a dancing school in Millville."

"A dancing school!" Nannie exclaimed, while Marguerite went on:

"I wanted to learn manners and how to be refined, and mother said the dancing school was the place for that; so I took a part of the ten dollars Margret gave me, to pay the tuition, and I go twice a week to Millville, with a lot more of the boys. But my gracious! I'd rather hoe corn all day long than stand up and face the music. I have fallen flat two or three times, and once I stepped on Lucy Belknap's dress and nearly knocked her down, besides pulling all the puckers from her waist You ought to have seen her look at me, and heard her call me an awkward clown. She wouldn't speak to me after that, and if she thought I was going to ask her to dance, she'd make a bee line for the other side of the room and pretend not to see me, but after Harry went with me, she met with a change, and now, oh, dear me suz, I'm '*Mr. Rathburn*,' instead of 'that Rathburn boy who dances like a cow.' You see, Harry came here one day suddenly, and nearly threw mother into hysterics, because she wasn't expecting him, and he caught her in what she called *dish*—something, hanged if I know. Anyhow. her hair stood up like a hurrah's next, and she had on a faded old calico sacque, and looked like anything but a poetess; but Harry didn't care, and was just as nice as you please, and asked if he could go up into the room where Nan was sick:—I went with him, and he acted as if he were in a church, saying the litany and the creed, and walked around softly, with his head down, as if afraid of disturbing somebody, and once, when he thought I didn't see, he put his hand on the pillow just as if he thought it were Nannie's face, or yours, more likely, seeing he's your beau."

Here Marguerite's heart gave a throb of pain,

while Nannie exclaimed, "How lovely that was in Harry," and then Marguerite read on:

"After dinner I went to the barn to harness Pedler, for it was dancing school afternoon, and Harry went with me, and when he asked where I was going, I plucked up courage to tell him, and showed him some of the steps and figures I'd learned. I wish you could have seen him laugh. Why, he actually rolled on the hay mow, and when he got up, he said, 'I congratulate you on your success, but let me show you a thing or two. I believe I can teach you more in half an hour than old Turveydrop can in a whole quarter. So we went at it on the barn floor, forward and back and crossed over and swung 'round, and *sashade* and do-se-doed, and alamand left, and the Lord only knows what else or how to spell it, till we were both out of breath, while Pedler stopped eating, and even old Brindle struggled to his feet to look at us. Then Harry said, 'Suppose I go with you? I'd like to see a country dancing school;' and my! what a sensation he made, and how the girls, who had never noticed me before, came around me to be introduced, and how Harry cut it down with them, dancing with nearly every girl in the hall, and saying, when it was over, he had never enjoyed himself more in his life.

"He talked a great deal about both of you, and sent his love, and said he shouldn't wonder if you'd see him in Colorado, and then he went away, and the house was lonesomer than ever. But I'm improving on the lesson he gave me, or rather lessons, for he gave me another in the kitchen with Maria for audience, singing Irish Washerwoman for us to dance by, and as she is posted, she helps me a lot, and I practice every day and come into the room and shake hands with her, and hold my hat the way Harry told me to, and am really getting very refined."

Both Marguerite and Nannie laughed till they cried over this letter of Jack's, which was one of many of a similar character which he sent them.

Sometimes they drove through the broad streets of the town and out as far as the Garden of the Gods, of which, with its wonderful formations, Nannie was never tired. Sometimes they visited Manitou Springs, and once in July, when Nannie was feeling unusually well, Marguerite left her alone, and went with a party of friends to the top of Pike's Peak and gazed with delight upon the magnificent view spread out before her, of valleys and plains, and streams, and snow-clad mountains in the distance. And thus the time passed rapidly until it was August, and the hotel was full of guests, and the electric cars, which ran in all directions, were each morning crowded with passengers, eager to explore the country and see whatever of interest there was to be seen in the neighborhood. The most popular route, perhaps, was that which led out to the great Canon and up to the lonely grave where "H. H." lies sleeping under the pile of stones which visitors have placed upon it as souvenirs of respect. And one lovely morning, when there was not a cloud in the sky except the few which were usually floating over the top of Pike's Peak, Marguerite and Nannie were among those who took their seat in the car and were whirled away across the plains to the Restaurant near the entrance of the Canon. Here Nannie rested, while Marguerite with others took donkeys to visit the grave, and when she returned it was so pleasant, and Nannie enjoyed it so much, that they stayed until afternoon, when, warned by a sudden

change in the temperature, and the dark shadows which began to creep down the hillside and across the level tract of country, they started for home.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE STORM.

Cyclones are not usual in the vicinity of Colorado Springs, but the storm which visited that section of the country during the summer of 1890 was almost as severe and will not soon be forgotten by those who witnessed it, whether from the windows of the hotels, or their own houses, or the electric cars, which for hours were held fast upon the track, exposed to the fury of the tempest. There had been for several days a succession of thunder showers, during one of which the Antler's Hotel was struck, and Nannie, who was constitutionally afraid of lightning, was beginning to dread the daily occurrence with nervous timidity. But on the morning of the day when she started with Marguerite for the Canon, the sky was as bright and clear as the skies of that far western country usually are, and nowhere was there a sign of the terrible storm which was first heralded by a bank of clouds rising over Pike's Peak and gradually covering the sky until the sunshine was blotted out and the shadows lay dark and heavy on the foot-hills and the valley between them and the town. Then flashes of light-

ning were seen, followed by a rumbling of distant thunder, which increased in volume until it roared through the wild gorges and deep canons like the sound of heavy artillery when a great battle is in progress, while the lightning, gathering strength and brightness with each succeeding flash, played for a moment around the top of Pike's Peak, and then leaping from crag to crag to the westward, struck old Cheyenne, which echoed back the storm, so that from time to time the entire space from Pike's Peak to Cheyenne was ablaze with light and vibrated with the deafening peals of thunder. The writer of this story was among those who watched the progress of the storm, from the first forked tongue of flame until the rain came down so fast that in an inconceivably short space of time the streets were like rivers of water, and the park in the rear of the hotel and the grounds around the station presented the appearance of a lake, on which were floating the leaves and branches of trees which the wind had beaten down. Then came the hail, small as pin heads at first, but increasing in size until it was like pebbles beating against the windows, many of which were broken, while chimneys were blown down, and horses were taken, some under piazzas, and one into a house, to shield them from the storm. On the Manitou road and the line to Austin's Bluff, and the Cheyenne Canon, electric cars were standing, unable to go forward, while inside the passengers were huddled together, trying in vain to escape from the hail and the rain, which drove through the curtains as if they had been paper, and ran in puddles across the floor.

Marguerite sat in the centre of the car, with Nannie beside her trembling with fear as crash after crash of thunder was heard, and at last hiding her face in Marguerite's lap to shut out the vivid flashes of lightning.

"Oh, what shall we do, and how cold it has grown," she moaned, as the wind swept through the car and threw her into a chill.

Taking off her sacque, Marguerite wrapped it around her sister, whom she took in her arms the better to shield her from the water which was rising so fast around her feet, while others among the passengers, knowing the danger there was to Nannie in that sudden change of temperature, took off their coats and shawls and gave them to her. But nothing could protect her entirely from the rain which came in at every point, wetting Marguerite's hat and hair and running down her back and face and dripping from her hands. But she did not think of herself. All her care was for the limp little figure lying in her lap, white and motionless except when a peal of thunder louder than usual rolled over their heads and a flash of lightning lit up the semi-darkness around them. Then she would shiver a little, and once she opened her eyes, and looking up at Marguerite smiled faintly, and said, "It's terrible to die here, but I suppose Heaven is just as near as from home."

With a sob, Marguerite stooped to kiss her and whisper some word of reassurance, when she became aware of an unusual stir at the end of the car, where a group of men were cautiously lifting the curtain and looking at a carriage which was

coming rapidly towards them. There was help at hand for some of them, Marguerite knew, though not for herself. She was strong and could bear it, but Nannie would go of course. No one would leave her there to die, and she said as much to her sister, who made no response, for with the last deafening peal of thunder, which shook the car as if it had been a reed, Nannie's consciousness had left her, and she looked as if she were really dead, while through the snow, which was now a foot deep, Marguerite heard the grinding of the wheels and the sound of horses' hoofs as a carriage drew up to the side nearest to her, and a voice which made her heart leap into her throat, called out, "Are the Misses Rathburn here?"

She could not be mistaken; it was Dr. Catheron calling through the storm, while in response to the answer, "Yes, they are here," she heard another voice, brave and cheery and hopeful,—Harry's voice,—talking eagerly to some one and giving orders. The next moment the curtains were parted, letting in a rush of wind and rain, while the crowd around her fell back to make room for two young men, who, with the water dripping in streams from their hats and mackintoshes, sprang to her side and bent over her,—once his face so close to hers that his brown beard brushed her cheek, as he said in a tone whose meaning she could not mistake, "Oh, Marguerite, thank God I have found you,"—while the other, whose lips must have touched Nannie's, whispered, "Oh, my darling, you are not dead?"

Then, for an instant, Marguerite forgot the storm

and the white face lying in her lap and everything else in the ecstasy of the moment, while Dr. Catheron's words "Oh, Marguerite, thank God I have found you," repeated themselves over and over again in her brain, just as did Harry's words to Nannie, "Oh, my darling, you are not dead?"

She knew it all now, and the revelation made her so giddy with joy that she had scarcely strength to loosen her hold on Nannie, whom Harry took in his arms, and covering her with a shawl which he brought under his waterproof, put her into the carriage, which, though very wet, was far more comfortable than the car had been.

"Now, Miss Rathburn," the doctor said, passing his arm around her and helping her to her feet, "it is your turn."

"No, no," Marguerite cried, "take some one else less strong than I am. It will not hurt me."

But the doctor was resolute, and put her into the carriage, where Harry was holding Nannie and wringing the water from her hair and her dress, and covering her with the rugs brought for that purpose.

"There's room for three or four more, if you sit close," the doctor said, returning to the car, and with his practiced eye singling out those who would suffer most from exposure. "The clouds are breaking; the storm will soon be over; and you'll be able to go on; or other carriages will come for you," he said to the remaining passengers, and then mounted the box, while Marguerite, who was holding the door open for him and wondering where he would find room in the crowded vehicle, called out,

"Oh, Dr. Catheron, you surely are not going outside!"

"Yes, I am," he answered, as he gathered up the reins. "I drove Nero out here, and must drive him back. There is no one else to do it, and no one can manage him in this storm but myself."

Then Marguerite knew that the huge animal, who set his feet down so strongly and heavily in the snow and seemed to carry his load so lightly, was the big black horse whom she had admired so much, never dreaming that he would one day play a part with her in so exciting a scene. It was impossible for her to do much for Nannie, crowded in as she was with five or six people, but she knew that she was safe with Harry, of whom she could ask no explanation of his almost miraculous appearance on the plains, until the hotel was reached and they had cared for Nannie, who, under the effects of the stimulants which Dr. Catheron gave her, began to revive, and opening her eyes looked around her with a growing wonder and surprise as they fell upon Dr. Catheron and Harry, the latter of whom was holding and rubbing her hands.

"Harry," she said very faintly, "am I dead? and are you dead, too? and where is Marguerite? and what was the dream I had of being drowned?"

"I am here," Marguerite said. "We are all here, Dr. Catheron and Harry; they came out on the plain and saved our lives. Don't you remember the Cheyenne Canon and the storm?"

"Ye-es; but I would rather not think now. I am very tired," Nannie answered, shutting her eyes again, and falling into a heavy sleep which the doctor

watched anxiously, while he told Marguerite how it happened that he and Harry and Nero were there together.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

NERO.

It had long been Dr. Catheron's intention to go to Colorado in August, and, if he found Nannie sufficiently recovered, to take her home, as Mrs. Rathburn was beginning to be very impatient at the protracted absence of her daughters. In the letters to her mother and Jack, Marguerite had frequently spoken of the drives around the town, and how much Nannie enjoyed them, and once she had written, "Tell Dr. Catheron that Nannie often speaks of Nero, and how she would like to see him prancing through the Garden of the Gods, and I think I should like it, too."

This suggested a new idea to the doctor, who after debating it awhile in his mind, resolved to act upon it, but decided to keep it and his intended visit to Colorado a secret from Marguerite and Nannie, whom he wished to surprise. Accordingly, for two weeks or more, Nero was cared for with as much solicitude as if he had been going upon the race course where large stakes were pending, and then, with a trusty groom, was sent on to Colorado Springs, which he reached a day or two in advance of the doctor, who had unexpectedly met Harry in Chicago.

"Mr. Bellamy! Dr. Catheron! Where are you going?" were the ejaculations which passed between them. And, "Going to Colorado Springs," was the reply of both, as they shook hands with great seeming cordiality.

Marguerite's letters to Harry had grown rather infrequent as the summer advanced, but he had borne their infrequency with a great amount of equanimity after Nannie began to write to him herself. This she had done since June, telling him of her improved health, and saying to him once or twice how glad she should be to see him, and that she was sure his coming would do Marguerite good.

"She doesn't seem as cheerful as she ought in this lovely place," she wrote. "I guess she is fretting for you, and if it were not for leaving your business I should insist upon your coming to see her."

She took it for granted that he had some business, although he had never told her what it was, and Harry, who was pursuing the same old indolent mode of life, laughed as he said to himself, "By Jove, how that girl does stick to the *business*, which, fortunately, is not so pressing that I cannot leave it, and go to Colorado and have a good time. Providence always provides for the lame and the lazy, and I certainly come under the last head. I wonder if Marguerite will really throw me overboard unless I have something to do. I have a suspicion it wouldn't cost her much to do it, for I don't believe she hankers after my society as much as she did."

Here he fell into a profound reverie, during which he walked the floor of his room as rapidly as he had walked the car on his return from Rocky Point,

when struck with an idea which had been gathering in strength and force ever since. That night he packed his valise, and at the last moment told his mother and Lucy where he was going, and left the house before the former had time to remonstrate. He had been on the train with Dr. Catheron all the time, but they had not met until they reached Chicago, where their surprise was mutual. Three days later they were in Colorado Springs, where they arrived an hour or two after Marguerite and Nannie had started for the Canon. Dr. Catheron's first inquiry, after asking for the young ladies and securing his room, was for Nero, whom he found in the stable opposite the hotel, standing rather dejectedly in his stall, with his head down and looking quite unlike the gay and lively beast with which he had parted the week before. Nero had not taken kindly to the cars, notwithstanding that he had the best of care, and he was taking less kindly to Colorado, where he ate but little, and seemed, as the groom said, to be homesick.

"Or else he's missing you. I'm inclined to think it's that," he added, as he took Dr. Catheron to the stable where a group of men and boys were gathered around the horse, which they admired greatly, but who, if they attempted to touch him, struck and kicked at them in a most unaccountable manner.

He evidently was not himself at all, and Dr. Catheron felt puzzled as he looked at him, while the groom said, "I'm quite sure he's pining for you. Suppose you stand out in the road and whistle as you used to call him at home."

Curious to see how far the instincts of the animal

could be trusted, Dr. Catheron took his station in the middle of the road and gave the peculiar whistle by which he was wont to call Nero to him. At the familiar sound Nero arched his neck and pricked up his ears, as if listening for it to be repeated, and when it came again he began to paw and try to get away. And when Dr. Catheron called out, "Nero, Nero, come here," he snapped his halter as if it had been a thread, and went bounding into the street, while more heels than his were in the air as the men and boys scattered in all directions, knocking each other down and rolling over each other in their efforts to get out of his way. How he curvetted and danced around his master, now approaching closely to him with a snort, and then springing backward and rearing in the air and gamboling about him, almost as playfully as a kitten, if such a monster as he was may be likened to a cat. Then suddenly, with a tremendous plunge, and elevating of his hind feet, he started down the street at a rapid rate, tossing his silken mane and shaking his head airily. But a call from the doctor brought him back again, and after a few more races in different directions he became very quiet and allowed himself to be led back to the stall, where he began to eat the oats which he had before refused.

It was after one o'clock by this time, and Dr. Catheron and Harry were beginning to look impatiently for the return of the young ladies, and were thinking of taking a car and going out to meet them, when the clerk at the hotel pointed to the clouds gathering over Pike's Peak, and said, "I wouldn't go. There's a storm coming up. They are sure to

be here soon, for the little one is afraid of thunder."

And so they waited, and walked back and forth from the hotel to the corner of the street from which the Canon car started, and from the corner of the street back to the hotel, while the clouds grew thicker and blacker, and the rain and hail began to fall so fast that the streets were soon deserted, and Dr. Catheron was appalled to hear that the car had probably stopped, as it usually did during a storm. This was undoubtedly true, for on the Manitou road, not far from the hotel, a car had been standing for half an hour or more, and as Dr. Catheron watched it, until he could see it no longer for the clouds of hail which enveloped it, he became greatly alarmed for the safety of Marguerite and Nannie, especially for the latter, to whom so much harm might be done by the exposure.

"You might go for them," some one suggested, "though I doubt if you can find any hackman willing to take the risk. They have already brought one or two horses under the piazza to keep them from being pelted to death."

"I can at least try," the doctor said, starting with Harry for the stable, where he found the men and boys huddled together in a corner, looking a little anxious and frightened at the unusual sight of snow a foot deep upon the ground in the month of August.

To the doctor's proposition that some one should drive him and Mr. Bellamy out to meet the car they listened in amazement, saying that nothing could tempt them to do it, while the proprietor of the

stable utterly refused to let his horses go, adding that the storm would soon be over, when help would be sent at once. But neither the doctor nor Harry could wait for this, and when Harry said, "There's Nero. Are you willing to risk him?" The doctor answered promptly, "Certainly, and drive him, too, if no one else will do it."

Getting himself ready and selecting the largest and closest carriage before which one horse could be driven, and telling Harry to take with him some stimulants and blankets and get inside, as it was necessary that one of them should keep as dry as possible, he ordered Nero to be brought out. At first the horse rebelled against the hail which pelted him so sharply, and reared higher in the air than he had done in the morning. But Dr. Catheron succeeded in quieting him, and covering him with two or three blankets, started on that strange drive through the blinding sleet and rain.

"The rest you know, except our terrible anxiety for your safety," he said in conclusion to Marguerite, with a look in his eyes which told her that she had understood him when he bent so close to her face with the passionate cry, "Oh, Marguerite, thank God I have found you!"

CHAPTER XL.

THE RESULT OF THE STORM.

With Dr. Catheron dividing his attentions pretty equally between Nannie and herself, and with Harry devoting himself almost entirely to Nannie, Marguerite would have been very happy, but for the relapse into which Nannie had fallen as a result of the drenching and the cold. All the good which she had gained seemed to have been lost, and she was apparently as weak as during the first stages of her illness. For nearly twenty-four hours after the deep sleep into which she had fallen, she lay with her eyes closed, realizing nothing that was passing around her, but occasionally shivering as if with fear, and moaning about the thunder and the rain. Then she began to look about her and to ask what had happened, and why Dr. Catheron and Harry were there. She had evidently forgotten seeing them before, and seemed greatly puzzled and perplexed.

"Don't you remember the storm, and how the doctor and Harry came to our rescue?" Marguerite said. But Nannie could recall nothing after the ball of fire which she thought had struck her in the face, and the peal of thunder which had taken her senses away.

"It was very dreadful," she said, "and it is dreadful here all the time, with so much thunder and

ghtning, keeping one so nervous and frightened ıat I shall never get well. I want to see father and ıother and Jack so much. Let's go home, Mar-uerite. Let's go home."

It was like the pleading cry of a child, and she ept it up for days, while they tried to quiet her.

"Why, Nannie," the doctor said, "Do you want) go home before you have driven in the Garden of ıe Gods after Nero? That's why I brought him."

"I don't care for the Garden of the Gods, or any ther garden but the one at home, which I dare say full of weeds by this time. I ought to be there to :e to it," Nannie said. "But take Marguerite, lease. She will like it, and Harry will stay with me."

"Certainly," Harry said, with a wonderful mount of cheerfulness. "Nero needs exercising. heard the groom say this morning that he would ick the stable down, if he were not driven pretty)on. Go, and I will see to Nannie, and read her ne of Tennyson's Idyls."

The next morning, as Nannie seemed unusually right, the doctor and Marguerite started for a rive behind Nero, who held his head very high, as proud of the handsome couple, both of whom :emed under a little restraint, and both of whom 'ere thinking of the words, "Oh, Marguerite, ıank God I have found you."

Once Dr. Catheron opened his lips to recur to ıem, but something in Marguerite's manner pre-ented him, and he only talked of the lovely day, ıd the scenery, and the wonderful formations of the arden of the Gods, and then of Nannie and the asibility of taking her home. On their return to

the hotel they found her sleeping, with Harry sitting beside her and also asleep. The book from which he had been reading was on the floor, and his hand on one of hers, which lay outside the covering. A sudden gleam of intelligence shot from Dr. Catheron's eyes to Marguerite, while a smile broke over both their faces, and then Harry awoke, and started guiltily, and drew his hand away, and wondered if he ought not to explain, to Marguerite at least, that Nannie had known nothing of the act, as he had put his hand on hers after she was asleep, because it looked so small and thin and helpless. But as neither Marguerite nor the doctor gave any sign that they had seen it he concluded to keep his own counsel and not try to explain his motives, lest he should make matters worse. Shaking himself together, and picking up his book, he began to ask them about their drive, and to compliment Marguerite on her brilliant color, saying she ought to visit the gods every day, as they evidently agreed with her.

For the next few days Nannie improved so fast and begged so hard to be taken home, that, contrary to his better judgment, the doctor yielded to her entreaties, and arrangements were made for the long, unbroken journey from Denver to Chicago, of which Nannie retained only a confused recollection. There was a crowd of people somewhere, and many faces looking at her, and voices speaking of her, and the scent of flowers, which she thought were brought to her. Then some one carried her into the car, where she lay in the drawing-room on the same soft mattress and pillows which she

remembered on her journey out. Sometimes the curtains of the bed and windows were closed and it was dark around her, and she heard nothing but the whirring of the train as it sped swiftly on, reminding her of the thunder which had frightened her so much in Colorado. Every time she stirred Marguerite came and parted the curtains and kissed her, and told her how far they were upon the journey. Then Dr. Catheron came and gave her something from a glass which Harry held, while Marguerite supported her head, and they all looked very tall and giant-like to her disordered vision. Sometimes the three sat together on the couch opposite, and talked in low tones of her, she knew, as she caught the sound of her name and wondered why they looked so sorry when she was so happy and free from pain, and glad because she was going home.

Once when Dr. Catheron and Marguerite had gone to their dinner, and Harry was alone with her, she fancied that he kissed her, but was not quite sure. Still she ought to tell Marguerite, and see what she thought about it.

"He was giving me a drink," she said, "with his arm under the pillow just as you put yours when you lift me up, and I am pretty sure that he kissed my forehead, just as Jack would, you know, if he were here. Do you care?"

"Not in the least," Marguerite replied. "The oftener he kisses you the better pleased I shall be; and now go to sleep. We are only a few hours from Chicago."

The next Nannie knew they were in Chicago, and

Marguerite was buttoning around her the flannel dressing-gown which had been made for her in Colorado Springs, while Harry was tying a white scarf over her head, and the doctor and two porters, with their hands full of satchels and wraps and pillows, were standing by. Then Harry took her in his arms again and carried her to another car, and into another drawing-room, and laid her down upon another bed, all *fac-similes* of those she had left.

"In less than forty-eight hours we shall be home," Marguerite said to her, as the long train moved out of the station, and she saw at the left the beautiful lake, and began for the first time to notice the country through which they were passing.

But she soon sank into a state of drowsiness, from which she did not rouse again until Albany was reached. Even here she might not have done so, but for the loud shout which greeted her as the car stopped and a boy came rushing in, nearly upsetting some of the passengers in his headlong haste to reach the compartment, from the window of which he had caught sight of Marguerite. It was Jack, who, knowing when the train would reach Albany, had done enough extra work for one of the neighbors to pay his fare to the city, where he intended to impress his sisters with the bow and svndry other little points which he had learned at dancing school. But at the sight of Marguerite he forgot his dancing manners and everything else in his excitement.

"Oh, Nan," he said, "I was never so glad in my life as I am to have you and Margie back. You don't know how lonesome it is at home, with mother at the point of death most of the time and having

prayers offered for her so often in church that I have quit going, because I am ashamed, and father is as blue as a whetstone, and Maria has got a beau who comes almost every night, and old Brindle is dead and buried. I would have embalmed him if I could, and kept him for you and Margie to see, but I couldn't, and so I gave him the tallest kind of a funeral, with some of the boys for mourners, and buried him under the apple tree where he used to lie in the summer, and when the boys didn't know it I said a prayer over him, because I thought it would please you. And somebody has tried to poison Tom, but didn't make it out, and this morning your speckled hen, which lays such big eggs, hatched out a brood of thirteen chickens, and Marcia Belknap has run away with the dancing master, and I have swapped my old jack-knife and pedometer for a dog,—Shep, we call him,—short for Shepherd, you know. He has such a pretty face, some like Nan's. But mother don't like him, nor Tom either."

He had told all his news at once without stopping to take breath, while Nannie, upon whom his presence operated like a powerful stimulant, began first to cry over Brindle, and then to laugh over the rest he had told, and seemed so strong that the doctor allowed her to sit up during the remainder of the journey to Rocky Point.

"If I could write poetry like mother I should certainly write it now," she said, as she looked out at the mountains and hills and valleys so familiar to her, and when Rocky Point was reached she would not allow them to carry her, but, supported by Dr.

Catheron and Harry, walked from the car into the arms of her father, who was waiting for her.

She had expected to find Pedler and the Pie-wagon there and was wondering how she should get in and out, but it was Dr. Catheron's softly cushioned brougham which carried her to the farm-house, where her mother had intended to meet her in the door-way in the wheel chair, which Marguerite's diamond money had bought, and in which she sometimes sat and rolled herself around the house. But a wakeful night and strong excitement had brought on a headache, and she received her daughters in bed, expressing her delight at having them home again and her grief that Nannie had not improved.

"You look as badly as when you went away," she said, with a thoughtlessness for which the doctor could have shaken her.

And when Nannie assured her that she was a great deal better and that now she was home she would soon be quite well, she shook her head gloomily and answered, "I hope so, but everything goes wrong. Brindle is dead; Maria has broken the china teapot that was your grandmother's; and the dog, which Jack has foolishly bought, has howled for three nights in succession. A sure sign that somebody is going to die. But I dare say it will be I, for I have been so far down towards the borderland which divides this world from the next, that I could see the dark shadows gathering around me and feel the chill of death's river creeping over my feet."

She was beginning to soar very high, and was mounting to greater heights, when the doctor inter-

posed and said that Nannie could not bear any more and must go to her room, where she soon fell asleep from exhaustion and fatigue, while Marguerite went back to her mother and the household cares which she was to take up again.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE SHADOW OVER THE FARM-HOUSE.

It grew very black and heavy when, after the excitement of reaching home was over, and the reaction came on, Nannie went much farther down into the valley of shadows than her mother had ever been, and was as motionless as if she were dead, except when they called her by name, and asked if she knew them. Then the faint fluttering of her eyelids and movement of her lips, told them that she was still alive. Dr. Catheron had done all for her which his skill could do, for medicine was no longer of any avail, and they had only to wait and watch and pray. And oh, how earnestly they did pray during the first days of September, when Nannie's life was balancing in the scale, and the bright sunshine which lay upon the hills seemed only to mock their pain. Mr. Rathburn left his work and staid all day in the house, or outside the door, while Jack lay upon his face under the apple tree near Brindle's grave, crying bitterly, and wondering what he had done to merit so heavy a pun-

ishment, and promising all sorts of things for the future if Nannie could only get well. Even Mrs. Rathburn forgot her own ailments, for now the mother was stronger than self, and she had her husband carry her up to Nannie's room, where she staid for hours, trying to do something, if only to keep a fly from lighting upon her daughter. Forcing down her own bitter pain, Marguerite kept bravely at her post, now bending over Nannie and whispering, "I am Marguerite, do you know me?"—now doing some little office for her mother, then going to her father with a word of comfort and hope,—and then going to Jack by Brindle's grave. But here she always broke down, for Jack's tears unnerved her, and the brother and sister would cry together as they sat under the shadow of the apple tree and talked of all Nannie had been to them, as if she were already dead. Three or four times a day Nero was hitched at the gate, while the doctor sat in the sick room doing nothing, for there was nothing to be done. Harry, who could not leave until he knew the best or worst, was there also. He had spoken of going to the tavern at Rocky Point, but this Dr. Catheron would not permit, and invited him so cordially to come to the Pines again, that his invitation was accepted, and Harry took possession a second time of the room which had been his the previous winter. Every morning found him in Nannie's room, standing in the farthest corner, as if he would keep out of everybody's way, especially Marguerite's. Her he seemed to try to avoid, as if fancying he was doing her some wrong. This Marguerite divined, and

meeting him once at the door as he came in, she said, "Don't be so afraid of me, Harry. I know. I understand."

"You do! By Jove, but I'm glad; and you don't care?" he asked.

"Not in the least," she answered, while Harry continued: "Well, that's jolly. For, you see, I didn't think you cared much for me, but if you did ever so little it would be mean in me to go back on my word. But when you began to sheer off, I couldn't help it; upon my word, I couldn't. You are sure you don't mind?"

"Very sure," Marguerite answered, with a feeling of great gladness that the tie between them was severed so easily, and when she next went up to Nannie and laid her hand upon her forehead, both Dr. Catheron and Harry saw that the engagement ring was gone, and the sight smote the one for a moment with a feeling of regret as for the loss of something which had been inexpressibly sweet, while to the other it brought a sense of joy which he found difficult to conceal.

He was nearly sure of the future now, and as it stretched out so bright before him, he felt a great pity for the young man whose sun seemed to be setting almost before it had risen. Never before had the mornings dawned so sadly, or the nights shut down so darkly over the house whose inmates did whatever they had to do mechanically, with always a thought and a prayer in their heart for the young girl who seemed drifting farther and farther away from them, and whom her father had

often called his little Aaron, she had been so helpful to him.

"She will never hold up my hands any more. And what shall I do without her?" he would whisper to himself, when doing the few things he was obliged to do, while the dumb beasts he was caring for appeared to know that something was wrong, and looked in his face as if asking what was the matter.

Could Nannie have known of all the love and sorrow and tears expended upon her, she would have wondered that she, who had thought so little of herself, could be of so much consequence. But she did not know, and remained unconscious until the close of the third day, when she roused suddenly from the stupor which she always spoke of as a dream, and began to mend. But her improvement was very slow. She called herself lazy, and said it was so nice to be waited upon and petted, as they were petting and waiting upon her, that she was afraid she should be bed-ridden and never get up unless something happened to rouse her.

CHAPTER XLII.

WHAT HAPPENED.

Harry, who had become Nannie's chaplain again, was sitting by her one morning as she lay upon the lounge, where she now spent a portion of every day. He had finished reading the Psalms, and was wonder-

ing if he couldn't venture upon some novel which would be more to his taste than the Prayer Book, when Nannie began to talk to him on the subject of faith in answer to prayer as proven by her recovery.

"I know you all prayed for me," she said, "when I was so near to the other world that I could almost look into it, and that is why God sent me back. I always pray for things I want, no matter how small they are, and if it is right for me to have them God gives them to me. You believe that, don't you?"

Harry was not very intimately acquainted with the kind of prayer and faith which Nannie was talking about, but he answered, "Oh, yes, I believe it, of course," and then began to turn the pages of one of Rider Haggard's novels, while Nannie fell asleep. For a time he was so absorbed in his story of "She" as to think of nothing else, but getting tired at last he closed the book, and began to look at Nannie, who in her sleep seemed whiter and thinner than when awake.

"What if she should die after all," he thought, and then, remembering what she had said about praying for what you want, he said to himself, "It won't do any harm to try it, anyway, and I suppose I may as well do it up ship-shape if I do it at all, and kneel instead of sitting here in my chair. That's the way Nannie would go at it, I suppose."

This was not a very devout frame of mind, but Harry was in earnest in what he wanted, and kneeling down close to the pillow on which Nannie was lying, he began to pray that she might get well and love him as much as he loved her. He had not

intended to pray aloud, and didn't know that he was doing so, until Nannie seized him by his hair, and raising herself up quickly, exclaimed, "Harry Bellamy, what do you mean, and what are you doing?"

"Great Scott! how you scared me!" he said, springing to his feet and looking down at her with a comical kind of smile, "I was praying, just as you told me to do."

"Yes," Nannie answered, "but what were you saying?"

"I was asking God to make you well so that you could some day be my wife, for I love you with my whole soul," Harry replied, making the plunge at once, while Nannie fell back on her pillow, and gasped, "If that doesn't beat all! Have you forgotten Marguerite?"

"Not at all," Harry answered. "We parted company some time ago, and she doesn't care."

"Are you sure?" Nannie asked, the light of a great and sudden joy irradiating her face. "Call her, please. I want to see her."

"Here she comes, proving the adage about angel's wings," Harry said. as Marguerite at that moment appeared in the door.

"Marguerite," Nannie cried, "come here, and tell me as true as you live and breathe, do you care for Harry?"

"Yes, very much," Marguerite answered, while Nannie's countenance fell, but brightened again as Marguerite, who was beginning to guess the truth, continued, "I care for him as a brother, which I hope he will some day be. Harry and I have been

dear friends, and always shall be, but we have found out that we are not lovers, and he is as free as if he had never known me;" so saying, Marguerite left the room, and Harry and Nannie were alone.

Kneeling beside her again, though not in prayer this time, Harry covered her face with kisses, while he told her how much he loved her.

"And, by Jove," he said, "I believe I began to love you from the day I saw you coming up the avenue on old Pedler, whom I held while you went in to sell some eggs."

"No, to get my pay for some I had sold," Nannie interposed, and Harry replied, "Well, to get your pay, then; it doesn't matter which. I thought you the prettiest little creature I had ever seen, and felt a stirring at the pit of my stomach, for which I couldn't account, but I know now that it was the awakening of my love for you. Don't think I never loved Marguerite, for I did, and neither mother, nor poverty, nor—" he couldn't say "family" to Nannie, who was of the same blood, and so he added, "nor the old Harry himself could have turned me from her, if she hadn't been so indifferent, and I hadn't seen you, who are better suited to me in every way than Marguerite, who is so grand, and so— Well, I guess she would try to boss me more than you will."

"I—don't—know—about—that!" Nannie said, emphasizing each word with a shake of her head, but Harry stopped her mouth with kisses, and said, "No, you won't, and if you do, I shan't mind. I might have been afraid of Marguerite, but you are

such a little thing that if you get on a rampage I can put you in my pocket."

And then he began to talk to her of their future, which was to be so bright, with nothing to do but to love each other.

"I haven't said that I do love you," Nannie interrupted him, with the first bit of coquetry she had ever shown or known.

This revelation of Harry's had come to her so suddenly that she had felt bewildered at first, and was bewildered still, although conscious that with the first kiss he had given her, and the first word of love he had spoken, there had sprung up in her heart a love for him which she did not know had existed, but which kept growing so fast that at last it seemed to her as if she had loved him all her life. And when he said a little reproachfully, "But you do love me, Nannie, and you will tell me so, and kiss me. You haven't done that yet," she put her arms around his neck and said, "Yes, Harry, I believe I do love you, although I never dreamed of such a thing until you frightened me so by saying that you loved me, and that Marguerite didn't care. Then it came to me so fast, that my heart keeps swelling and swelling in my throat, and I am so glad. I never thought such happiness was for me, or that any one could love me, as you say you do. When I used to see Alice and Dr. Catheron together, and you and Marguerite, I knew that love must be a blessed thing, but had no hope that it would ever be mine. And now it has come, and I am so happy, and if you really want me to kiss you, I will;" and lifting up her face she pressed her lips against his, while he held

her to his bosom so tightly that she gave a cry of pain, and said, "Oh, Harry, you mustn't squeeze me so hard; it hurts, and I am not used to it."

Then he released her, and putting her back upon the pillow, still knelt by her, sometimes caressing her hair and sometimes her face, and sometimes kissing her passionately in the ecstasy of his happiness. It was an impetuous kind of love-making, for Harry was an impetuous fellow, and loved the fragile little girl, whom he could have crushed to death in his strong arms, as he had never loved any one before. Marguerite had been very dear to him, but she was not like Nannie, whose sweetness and innocence had impressed him so much, and over whom he gloated as over a newly found treasure.

After a time he began to speak again of the future and what they would do.

"We must be married as soon as you are able," he said, "for a change of air and scene will do you good, and I shall take you to Italy. How would you like that, Mignon?"

"I should like it so much," Nannie said. "I have always wanted to go there, but never supposed I should. Miss Grainger once told me that a whole loaf of happiness would come into my life, and it has come, and you have brought it, and I love you so much."

She was not ashamed to confess her great and new-born love, nor was Harry tired of hearing it, and he sat by her, caressing and kissing and listening to her, and with every kiss and caress feeling his love grow stronger, until Nannie suddenly brought him down from his elysian heights by ask-

ing how they could afford to go abroad, and if he could leave his business.

"You must have some by this time," she said, "although I have been so ill I have never thought to ask you. What is it? And hasn't it suffered from your long absence?"

This was a good deal of a fall from the rhapsodies in which he had been indulging. But Harry met it honestly.

"To tell you the truth, Nannie, I haven't any business, and haven't had any."

"You haven't! Oh, Harry!" and Nannie's eyes looked very sorrowfully at him, while he continued: "I did try to get something to do last summer before going to Colorado. I tried in three or four places, but nobody would have me after looking me over. One brute of a man told me to go home and put on my old clothes, if I had any, and a colored shirt, and change the part in my hair, and roughen my hands, then he would talk to me. This so disgusted me that I didn't try any more."

"I should think so,—a colored shirt indeed!" Nannie said, with a good deal of asperity for her, as she looked admiringly at the young man, who was now her property, and on whom old clothes and a colored shirt would be out of place.

Harry detected her sympathy, and kissing her for it, went on: "And, Nannie, something has turned up, as I always thought there would. There has been a boom in Tacoma, and yesterday I was offered ten thousand dollars for property that only cost a thousand. What do you think of that?"

This piece of news so electrified Nannie that she

arose to her feet and said, "I think it's splendid. Why, that's enough to last us all our lives, if we are economical, as we must be abroad, and when we come home we will settle in the country where living is cheap, and I can see our folks every day. There's a pretty little cottage in Rocky Point, where I always thought I'd like to live. We might buy that and perhaps you could oversee the paper mills which are near it."

Harry laughed as he saw himself living in Rocky Point and overseeing paper mills, but he told Nannie that she was a famous manager, and would make a capital wife for a poor man. Then, as he saw she was getting tired, he left her, promising to come again in the afternoon. In the sitting-room he met with Marguerite, who beamed upon him with eyes so dazzling and a smile so intoxicating, that if his love for Nannie had not been as strong as it was, he might have wavered in the step he was taking. But Nannie had full and entire possession of his heart, and when Marguerite asked, "Am I to congratulate you?" he answered at once, "Yes, Nannie has promised to be my wife, and I am so happy."

"And I am very happy, too," Marguerite replied, with a face which did not belie her words, while Harry went on: "I see you are, but, Madge, I did love you very much, and would have gone on loving you to the end of the chapter, if you hadn't begun to waver and go away from me. You believe that, don't you?"

"Yes, I believe it," Marguerite said, and then, not caring to continue a conversation so personal in its nature, she asked him of his plans for the future, say-

ing she hoped he would not take Nannie from them for a long time.

"But I shall," he said, "I shall take her as soon as she is able to travel. We are going to Italy and everywhere, and to-morrow I am going home to make arrangements and tell mother. I am curious to know what she will say."

Marguerite was curious, too, and rather pitied the young man, who didn't look as if he needed any pity. He was in the best of spirits, and invited himself to stay to dinner, and went of his own accord to see Mrs. Rathburn, to whom he presented himself as the future husband of Nannie instead of Marguerite. Mrs. Rathburn had heard from Marguerite something of the state of affairs, and was not as astonished as she would otherwise have been, but she thought it proper to cry a little and use a great many large words, while she accepted him a second time as her son-in-law, and gave him a great many injunctions with regard to his treatment of a girl as fragile, and tender, and innocent and simple-hearted and flower-like as Nannie. Then she startled him by saying, "Have you seen her father yet, and asked his consent?"

"Why, no," Harry stammered. "I haven't. Do you think I ought to?"

"Certainly," Mrs. Rathburn replied, with a great deal of dignity. "You asked Mrs. James Rathburn's consent when you proposed to marry Marguerite, didn't you?"

"Ye-es, I said something to her about it after Madge and I had fixed it up between ourselves," Harry said, and Agnes continued:

"And are we not entitled to as much deference as Mrs. James Rathburn?"

"Of course," Harry answered, feeling like a school-boy arraigned for some misdemeanor. "I will go to him now and have it out. Where is he?"

He found him in the barn fastening a board in one of the stables, while Jack sat on the floor, holding Shep and trying to make peace between him and Tom, who was perched on a pile of hay, and watching the dog with no friendly intent.

"Hallo, Harry! Is service out? How is Nan?" Jack asked.

"First rate," Harry answered, and then summoning up his courage, he said to Mr. Rathburn, who was standing with his back to him, and his hand up ready to drive a nail, "Mr. Rathburn, I've come to ask your consent to marry your daughter."

"Which daughter?" Mr. Rathburn asked, without turning his head, and still keeping the nail in its place with one hand, while the other held the hammer raised in the air ready to strike it.

"Nannie," Harry replied, while Jack sprang to his feet and let go of Shep, who, with Tom at his heels, disappeared in a trice from the scene.

"Nan! Great guns! I thought you was engaged to Marguerite," Jack said.

"So I was, but now I am engaged to Nannie," Harry replied, while Mr. Rathburn drove in the nail with a tremendous blow, and picking up another, asked, "What does Marguerite say?"

"She is very glad. She doesn't care at all," Harry answered.

There was another nail driven in, and then Mr. Rathburn asked, "What does Nan think about it?"

"She is willing," Harry said, and then waited while Mr. Rathburn put his hammer back in the nail box, swept out the stable with the stub of a broom, brought in a pail of water for Pedler, and then, with his back still to Harry, said, "Then I suppose I'm willin', too."

Harry, who was dripping with perspiration by this time, was glad to escape into the open air with Jack, who was eager in his inquiries and exclamations.

"If it don't beat the Dutch," he said, "that you should be going to marry Nan, that mite of a thing. Folks will think that she's your little girl. When have you done your courting?"

Harry could laugh now, feeling almost as much a boy as Jack, and was so confidential in his explanations that Jack had a pretty thorough knowledge of the business, which he accepted without a demur.

"I never supposed Nan would marry, she is so small," he said, "and she always declared she wouldn't, but if she must I'd rather she'd have you than anybody else, and I think she is better suited to you than Marguerite; but, little as she is, she'll make you toe the mark, you bet! The smartest stuff is always in the smallest vials, they say. I shall miss Nan awfully, but I'm glad she's going to those foreign places. I wish I could see them, too!"

"And you shall some time, when my second ship

n," Harry said, telling Jack of Tacoma and
ey he was to get from his lots there.
r had done his duty by all the family, and his
as very light when he returned to the house
ck, who went at once to Nannie and asked
at she had been up to and how she thought
ld look by the side of Harry.
r, he'll have to stoop down to touch you, and
ave to get a ladder when you want to kiss
' said.
e was too happy to take his teasing other
an good humoredly, and when he said in
"But, honor bright, I think Hal just about
st chap I ever saw," she put up her lips and
im, and then sent him away, as she heard
alling her father to dinner. That night
old the news to Dr. Catheron, who did not
y more surprised than Mr. and Mrs. Rath-
l been, and who congratulated him warmly,
ed with him of his future plans, but avoided
ence to Marguerite. The next morning
as a farewell interview between Harry and
and then the doctor drove the former to the
where he took the train for New York.

CHAPTER XLIII.

HARRY INTERVIEWS HIS MOTHER.

Mrs. Bellamy was very angry with her son both for his protracted absence and his persistent ignoring of her letters, asking what he was doing, and why he stayed away so long? She knew that Marguerite had been in Colorado, and that since his return from that State he had been staying at the Pines, where he could see her every day. He would marry her, of course. She had made up her mind to that, but she would not accept the inevitable pleasantly or graciously. He should feel the full weight of her displeasure, and when, as he drove up to the house from the station, he met her just going out, her face was very cold and forbidding, and she barely offered him the tips of her fingers. Without seeming to notice it, Harry tried to kiss her, and said, with his usual heartiness, "Hallo, mother, did you think I had deserted you?"

Drawing back from him she answered very stiffly, "I don't know what else I could think, with you staying away so long, even after you knew how ill Lucy was."

"Lucy ill?" Harry repeated, without a thought that he was giving himself away.

"Yes," Mrs. Bellamy replied, "I told you that in my last letter, and asked you to come home. Have you forgotten it?"

Harry didn't know what to say, for the truth was that Jack had brought him the letter while he was

reading to Nannie, and not thinking it of much consequence, he had put it in his pocket and never thought of it since. But he couldn't tell his mother that, and as she seemed to be in a hurry, he went with her to the coupé and telling her he should see her at lunch time, said good morning and returned to the house.

"She looked as if she would like to bite a ten-penny nail. I don't believe I want to tackle her until I have seen Lucy and enlisted her on my side," he thought, as he went up to his cousin's room.

Miss Grady, who had been suffering from a severe attack of influenza, was better, and was sitting up with Grip asleep in her lap, but Harry had never seen her looking as thin and sallow as she was now.

"Oh, Lucy," he said, drawing a chair close to hers, "I didn't know you had been so ill, or I would have come home before. What has been the matter?"

"Nothing but a cold which settled on my lungs," she replied. "I am better now, but am glad you are home. Your mother has been in such a dreadful way about it."

Then she asked him about Colorado, and Marguerite and her sister—"the little creature with such old-fashioned ways, and big shoes and eyes. Nancy, or Hannah. What was her name?"

"Nannie," Harry said, with so much energy that Lucy looked up quickly.

"Yes, Nannie," she repeated. "I remember now. She had a sweet face, although different from Marguerite's. When do you expect to be married?"

The question was very abrupt, but Harry answered readily: "In a few weeks, I hope, and that is what I want to talk with you about before mother comes in. I am not—" Here he stopped an instant, and Lucy went on. "I didn't suppose it was to be so soon, but it is just as well. I have made my will and left you enough to make you and Marguerite comfortable at least, even if your mother does carry out her threat of giving you nothing."

"But, Lucy," Harry interrupted her. "You don't know—"

"Yes, I do," she said, "and you must wait until I am through. I have a presentiment that I shall not live very long, my cough is so bad; but whether I do or not, it will be the same with you. If I die soon you will get what I have left you, and if I live I shall make it over to you at once as a gift,—fifty thousand dollars,—which ought to keep you and Marguerite in comfort, at least."

Harry would not be restrained any longer, and exclaimed, "Now, Lucy, you must listen. There has been a change of base, and it isn't Marguerite now. She is tired of me, and has been for a long time. I think she will marry Dr. Catheron. And I am going to marry Nannie."

"Nannie!" Lucy repeated, starting so quickly that Grip awoke and began to growl. "Marry Nannie! that child!"

"She is not a child," Harry said. "She is nineteen, and the dearest and most lovable little creature you ever saw. Marguerite could do a great deal with me, but Nannie can do more. She can twist me around her fingers as if I were a straw. And she

has made me kind of pious, too. What do you think of my sitting an hour every morning reading the Bible and the Prayer Book to her, just as if I liked it? Well, that is what I have done, and Jack, her brother, calls me her chaplain."

Then he told her of Nannie's illness and the storm on the plains, and all which had followed since; his love for Nannie and his determination to marry her, and the boom in Tacoma, which would make him quite independent for a time.

"It was awfully nice in you, Lucy," he said, "to make your will and give me so much money, but I don't need it now. Nannie's habits are of the simplest kind, and I am going to conform to them, and be a man and make something of myself. You'll see!"

As he talked he managed to fill Lucy with so much of his own enthusiasm that she became greatly interested in Nannie, whose ally she promised to be.

"But you must tell your mother yourself; it will be better," she said, when Harry suggested that she should be the go-between.

This he decided to do, and with a good deal of anxiety he waited for the opportunity, which did not come until after lunch, when he was alone with his mother in her room. Then bracing himself up and jamming his hands into his pockets, he said, "Mother, I am going to tell you something which I suppose you won't like, but I hope you will hold on to yourself and not go off into a tantrum, for there is no help for it. I am going to be married."

"I supposed you were. You certainly ought to be after hanging around a girl as you have been

hanging around Marguerite for the last two months," Mrs. Bellamy answered dryly, adding, as her temper began to rise, "You know the conditions, of course."

"Oh, thunder take the conditions!" Harry replied, walking up and down the room and kicking over a footstool in his excitement. "What do I care for the conditions? I'm independent now Tacoma has come up, and I'm worth ten thousand dollars, besides my own private income, which you can't take away, and that will support us, for it isn't Marguerite at all. We have dissolved partnership, and I am going to marry her sister Nannie."

"Marry Nannie! That girl who waited upon us!" Mrs. Bellamy gasped in a whisper, for she hadn't the strength to speak aloud.

"Yes, I'm going to marry Nannie," Harry repeated, while his mother sat motionless, with a feeling that she was turning into stone.

To say that she was astonished would but feebly portray her state of mind. She had mentally accepted Marguerite because she felt that she must. And it had been some comfort for her to know that although her daughter-in-law would come to her without money and without a family, she would be a queen of society wherever she went. But Nannie, with no training, no culture, no style,—the girl who had urged her to take another croquette and told her it wouldn't hurt her,—the dairy-maid, who had offered to sell her butter,—the dowdy who rode a man's saddle with a basket on her arm! It was too much for her, a Bellamy and a Grady, and she went off into hysterics as much stronger than any which

Mrs. Rathburn had ever had, as she was stronger physically than that woman. And while she sobbed and cried and wrung her hands, Harry walked up and down until she became quiet, when he said, "I'm sorry you take it so hard. You will love Nannie when you know her."

"Never!" she answered. "Nor will I ever see her, —a designing country girl, with no manners whatever, who has inveigled you into an engagement of which you will tire in a month. How could you think of a girl so low-born and ignorant?"

"Mother," Harry said, stopping short and confronting her, while something in his voice made her think of the way her dead husband used to speak to her when she was trying him as she was trying Harry, "mother, you shall not talk like that of Nannie in my presence, or if you do I will leave the house and not come back again. She is neither ignorant, nor low-born, nor designing; she is a lady in the true sense of the word, and has one of the noblest and most unselfish natures I ever knew. She is to be my wife, and I love her as I have never loved any one else, not excepting Marguerite. I think I began to love her the morning I saw her at the Mountain House and her sweet face looked up so trustingly at me, and I have gone on loving her ever since, until now the hours when I am away from her seem like weeks, and I shall never be quite happy until she is mine."

He was grand in his defense of Nannie, and his mother felt it and respected him for it in spite of her displeasure, and knew that the chain with which she had held him had been broken by the hands of a

weak little girl, whom she must take as her daughter whether she were willing or not. But she would not give in then, and she had so severe a headache that she was obliged to give up the dinner party to which she had been invited. But after a night's reflection and a long talk with Lucy, who always influenced her more or less, she became outwardly composed, although the expression of her face was so aggravating and the tone of her voice so injured whenever she spoke to Harry that he grew desperate, and when not upon the streets, spent most of his time with Lucy, who entered heartily into all his plans for the future, and wrote a letter of congratulation to Nannie, whom she addressed as her "Dear Cousin." Either Harry's presence or the sight of his happiness had acted like a tonic upon Lucy, who grew stronger so fast that she said to Harry one day, "I'm afraid I'm not going to die after all. I feel so much better since you came home and gave me something to think of besides myself. I believe it does me good to have some interest in younger people, and I have been wondering how you would like to have me go abroad with you and Nannie, and take my maid with me. She could wait upon both of us, and I have been in Europe so much that I know all its ins and outs and might be of some service to Nannie. What do you think of it?"

Harry didn't exactly know what he thought, but he answered her at last. "I've no doubt but Nannie would be delighted, and that you would be a help to her, and on some accounts I should like it, too. But you see,"—here he began to shake down his

pants and pull at his coat and vest. "You see, I might want to be more spoony than you, who know nothing of such things would think proper, and you would be in the way."

"Is that all?" and Lucy laughed merrily. "Don't you know I am blind and can't see much that is going on, and I'm beginning to get deaf, too; and besides that I think I shall know enough to keep out of your way and let you be as spoony as you please."

Harry, who knew that this plan of Lucy's was dictated quite as much by a desire to do him and Nannie good as to benefit herself, began to approve of it, but said he must consult Nannie, of course. And a few days after he went again to Rocky Point, to perfect his arrangements for the marriage, which was to take place the last of November.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE WEDDING.

Mrs. Bellamy had not said a word against Nannie to Harry since the stormy interview when he told her of his engagement. But she had made him feel in various ways that she did not like it, and was only submitting to it because she must, and still she could not help feeling some interest in the matter, and when Lucy Grady, who went to Rocky Point to see Nannie, came back full of praises of her sweet-

ness and beauty, she began to think that it might not be quite so bad after all, and went to Tiffany's and bought a pearl necklace, feeling, however, that it would be sadly out of place on the dairy-maid. She also told Harry that he might bring his bride to her house for the two days which would elapse between his marriage and the sailing of the *Teutonic*. This invitation Harry declined, as he preferred going to a hotel.

"But it was kind in you to ask me," he said, "and I wish you would go to the wedding."

"No, Harry. I can't do that," Mrs. Bellamy replied, but when Mrs. Catheron, who was not supposed to know of her opposition, wrote inviting her and Miss Grady to stop at the Pines during her stay at Rocky Point, she began to waver, and finally decided to go, and on the morning of the day before the wedding she went to the Pines, and in the afternoon drove with Lucy to the farm-house.

Marguerite was both surprised and delighted to see her, and looked so queenly and beautiful that Mrs. Bellamy regretted, as she had many a time, that she had not urged Harry's immediate marriage with her instead of opposing it.

"She would never shame me as the other one will," she thought, just as she heard Harry's voice in the hall, and a moment after he appeared with his arm around Nannie, in whom a great transformation had taken place since Mrs. Bellamy saw her.

She had improved rapidly in the last few weeks, and although she was still very frail, her cheeks and figure were rounded out, her eyes had in them the brightness and sparkle which only perfect love

can create, her complexion was like apple blossoms in May, and her hair, a part of which had fallen out during her illness, was confined in her neck with a knot of ribbon. But what changed her most was her tailor made dress of navy blue, the first fashionable gown she had ever had, and which was very becoming to her.

"She *is* lovely," Mrs. Bellamy thought, and arose to meet her, and kissing her on the forehead made her sit down beside her, while Harry and Lucy, knowing the two would get on better alone, left the room.

At first Nannie was very shy and very much afraid of the great lady who was scanning her so curiously, and she wished Harry were there to help her. Gradually, however, her embarrassment wore off, and she began to talk so naturally and sensibly that Mrs. Bellamy found herself softening a good deal towards her, and the kiss she gave her at parting was much more cordial than her first had been.

"She is very pretty and sweet, but she has no style or manner," she said to Lucy as she was driving back to the Pines. "I am glad now that you are going with them, as you can do much towards cultivating her, and possibly on her return she will be quite presentable."

It had been decided that Lucy should accompany the young couple, an arrangement very pleasing to Nannie, whose choice in the matter was consulted as it was in everything, and who was constantly in a state of amazement to find herself of so much consequence. When the two or three pretty dresses which Marguerite had ordered for her in Millville

came home, with hats and gloves to match, and when Dr. and Mrs. Catheron's and Mrs. Bellamy's presents arrived, and Jack added to them a string of silver beads bought with his own money, she began to protest and to wonder why so much was being done for her.

"It's only I who am to be married, and it is not worth the while to spend so much on me," she said.

"And it is just because it is you that we are doing it," Marguerite would reply, and then hurry away to hide her tears, for her heart was very heavy when she thought of Nannie gone and herself left alone.

* * * * * * *

The bridal morning dawned clear and bright, and Marguerite, who was up very early, thought, as she opened her window and inhaled the balmy air which came down from the mountains and hills, "If the day had been made on purpose for Nannie it could not have been better, and I am glad for her, but oh, what shall I do without her!"

"Good-morning. Look here," came in tones which made her heart leap, as she was drawing back from the window, and turning in the direction of the voice, she saw Dr. Catheron holding up a large basket of exquisite flowers. "Excuse me if I startled you," he said, "I had to visit a patient at this early hour, and I thought I would bring the flowers with me. Will you take them, or shall I leave them with Maria?"

"I'll come," she said, with a feeling that the world was not quite so desolate after all.

Hurrying down to the door she took the basket

from the doctor, who stood for a moment looking at her just as she had never seen him look at her before. There was no mistaking the nature of the look, and Marguerite did not mistake it, and her eyes fell beneath his gaze and she was glad that he went away so soon and left her alone with the joy which was a certainty now, and although her heart still ached whenever she thought of Nannie, there was, side by side with the ache, a song of gladness which helped to ease the pain.

The wedding was at two o'clock, and none who were present ever forgot Nannie's rapt expression as she stood by Harry's side, and took the vows which made her his forever. To her it was a sacrament in the holiest sense of the word, and the face which Harry kissed so passionately was like the face of an angel, and shone with a marvelous light. Even Mrs. Bellamy was touched, and under its softening influence tried to comfort Mrs. Rathburn, who was sobbing bitterly, and had to be taken to her bed as soon as the ceremony was over. It was impossible for Marguerite to leave her and go to the station as she had intended doing, nor was she very sorry, as she would rather say good-bye at home.

"I am so glad for you," she said, winding her arms around the dear little girl, who had been so much to her. "You deserve all the happiness you are getting. But, Nannie, oh, Nannie, how shall I live without you?"

Here her voice failed her, and without a word of farewell to Harry or Lucy or Mrs. Bellamy, she ran up to the room which she had lately occupied with

Nannie, and throwing herself upon the lounge, cried till she could cry no longer, moaning as she cried, "Oh, Nannie, Nannie darling, I never knew how much I loved you until now that you are gone." She heard the carriages at the gate, and the sound of voices in the yard, Harry's voice loud and cheery. Dr. Catheron's voice, saying something about "Mrs. Harry Bellamy," and Nannie answering him; then the carriages drove away, and going to the window she looked after them until they disappeared from view, with much the same feeling in her heart as had been in her father's when years ago he watched her going from him. She had come back, and it was Nannie's turn now to see the world, and hers to wait and serve and minister to her mother, who was calling for her, and who, when she went to her and asked what she wanted, answered, "Nothing, nothing but Nannie, and she is gone."

CHAPTER XLV.

JACK'S DIARY.

When Marguerite awoke the next morning there were rain-drops on the windows, and she heard the wind howling plaintively around the house as if moaning for something lost. The weather had changed, and as she dressed herself she thought, "The melancholy days, the saddest of the year, have really come to me, although, if Nannie were

here, I shouldn't mind so much, for I rather enjoy a rainy day."

But Nannie was gone, and Marguerite's heart ached as it had never ached since the first dreary weeks which had succeeded her mother's death. There was much to do in the house that day, and Marguerite was glad of it, as it kept her mind occupied, and she tried to be brave and cheerful for the sake of those around her. But it was hard work, for her mother was very exacting, and impatient, and unreasonable. Nothing was as Nannie had done it.

"But then," she said, "I suppose I must get accustomed to it, as I can never have Nannie again."

"I'll do the best I can to fill Nannie's place," Marguerite answered meekly, as she tried to make her comfortable, and then went into the kitchen, where, on the pretense of helping Maria, she stayed so as to be near her father.

As the weather precluded out-door work, Mr. Rathburn was in the house all the morning, going occasionally to his wife, but sitting most of the time by the window and looking out into the rain with an expression on his face which made Marguerite's heart ache for him.

"Did he look like that the day I went away, I wonder!" she thought, and going up to him, she parted the thin grey hair on his forehead, and kissing him, said, "Father, Nannie is not dead; she will come back again; think how much worse it would be if we had buried her yesterday and the rain was falling on her grave."

"Yes, Margie, I know," Mr. Rathburn replied, "and I didn't mean to take it so hard, but I miss her

so much, for she filled a tremendous space. But, thank God, I have you left. I can't tell you what a comfort that is, or how glad I am that you are here."

Marguerite's heart was lighter after that, and the day did not seem half as gloomy. Jack, who told Marguerite that he was going to keep a stiff upper lip, kept his word for a while, and even made a faint attempt at "Captain Jenks," but very soon after breakfast, Maria saw him, with Tom in his arms and Shep at his side, going to the barn, from which he emerged about noon with a very red nose and redder eyes and but little appetite for the nice dinner which Marguerite had ordered with direct reference to his taste.

That afternoon there came a telegram from Harry, who was stopping at the Windsor, and who said that Nannie was well and that they were to sail the next day at three o'clock. This telegram was like a bit of Nannie come back again, and helped to keep up the spirits of the family until Sunday when they received a letter from her, written the previous day in her state-room, which she said was full of flowers and fruit and books and everything which could make the voyage comfortable, all gifts from Harry and Lucy, who were so kind, and she was very happy except when she thought of the folks at home.

"And then," she wrote, "the tears will come, but for Harry's sake I wipe them away and pray silently for you all. Tell mother that I dreamed last night that she was well again and could walk, and was around the house as she used to be when I was a

little girl, and father was so happy and looked young and handsome, as I am sure he looked when he was first married. And when I awoke and found it only a dream I cried a little, and prayed earnestly that it might be, and I can't help feeling that it will be yet. Tell mother to try to walk for father's sake, and your sake and all of us; and I believe she will; not the first day, of course, nor the second, but after awhile, step by step, she will learn as children do, and I shall be so glad, and may be she will be on the wharf to meet me when I come back. That would be splendid. Miss Grady's room is next to mine, and what do you think she has done? It benumbed me so that I do believe I could have stuck a pin into my flesh and not have felt it. She has given me property to the amount of fifty thousand dollars, all my own, to do with as I like! I can't realize it, and I want Harry to have it. But he says no, it is mine! Miss Grady offered it to him, but he would rather I would have it. Think what a rich woman I am. And now Jack shall have a race horse and see the Pyramids and the Sphinx, and all those things we used to talk about, and father shall have a hired man, and mother a silk wrapper, and everything. It is all like a dream. Harry has just come in, and says the people are leaving the ship and I must finish this at once. So, good-bye to all, with heaps of love from "Yours truly,

NANNIE RATH——"

Here Nannie's part of the letter came suddenly to an end, but joined to the "Rath" in a masculine hand was the word "Bellamy," while in a postscript Harry had written, "How does that look for high? Nannie Bellamy!"

This letter Mrs. Rathburn read and re-read many times and then put under her pillow, studying it often, Marguerite knew, as she frequently found her

with it open before her as if she were committing it to memory.

As the longest days have an end, so the days which succeeded Nannie's departure went by one after another until there came a cablegram from Queenstown, dated December 1st and saying:

"All safe. Nannie never lost a meal, but Lucy was heaving up Jonah most of the time. Are going on to Italy. HARRY."

Of this cablegram Jack took possession, keeping it as a kind of curiosity, and exhibiting it with considerable pride to one or two of his boy friends, who treated him with an added amount of respect on account of it and because he had a sister abroad. That day Jack commenced a diary, which was to be a record of the incidents as they occurred in the family, and when finished was to be sent to Nannie. He had borrowed Maria's "Complete Letter Writer," as a help to his composition, which he thought ought to be uncommonly fine under the circumstances, and his first entry was as follows:

"Rocky Point, Dec. 2d, 18—.

"MY DEAR NAN:

"I now take my pen in hand to inform you that we are all well and hope these few lines will find you and your family enjoying the same great blessing—"

At this point the Letter Writer did not seem to help Jack much, and putting it aside, he continued in his own language:

"Now I will tell you, first of all, that I am going to keep a kind of diary," (he spelled it *dairy*) "till I get several pages full, for it don't seem worth while to send a little bit of a letter so far. Now, you've no idea what a black day that was after you left us, nor how mother carried on, till Margret got her quiet and suggested that she should write some verses about your going away. I guess she scribbled about ten yards, but they haven't been printed yet. I never saw father so used up, except when he thought you were going to die. He staid in the house all day looking straight at nothing, but keeping up a dreadful thinking. I didn't mean to cry, but when, in the wood-shed, I saw the old sun-bonnet you used to wear in the garden, I blubbered right out, it looked so much like you, and as I didn't want them to see me, I took Tom and Shep and went out to the barn and sat on the hay and looked into the rain,—for the clouds were crying, too; and I stayed there till Margret called me to dinner. She had got up a tip-top one, fricasseed chicken and all that, but I couldn't eat much; nothing would go down except the ice cream; there was an awful lot of that left, and Sally Marsh took home at least a quart. Margret is just as nice as she can be, and tries to do things as you did, but her eyes are red sometimes and she stands a good deal by the window looking out as if watching for something. Dr.Catheron must think mother is worse, for he is here every day and sometimes twice a day. My, what a bill he'll have against father. I'm glad you've got to be a Vanderbilt, because you can help pay it."

The next entry in the diary was:

Dec. 3d. "Nothing of importance turned up today, except that Dr. Catheron stayed to supper, and we had griddle cakes and maple syrup, and

Maria winked at me when she told me the doctor was going to stay, and I must mind my p's and q's. What did she wink for?

"*Dec. 4th.* Got up and went to school, and carried some apple turnovers for my dinner. Came home again, and found Margret with a lavender ribbon at her throat and Dr. Catheron just going away, and Maria winked at me again.

"*Dec. 5th.* Went to school and came home and found Margret with three lavender bows, one at her throat, and two on her basque, I guess you call it, —the thing that's puckered up on the side, and Dr. Catheron just riding away. Maria winked again. What do you think she's up to? I don't like her winking so much at me, and won't have it, either.

"*Dec. 7th.* Yesterday was Sunday. Went to church and came home. Dr. Catheron wasn't here, but Maria's beau, Patrick, was, and stayed till eleven o'clock, and I heard Margret tell her it mustn't occur again, as it wasn't respectable to sit up so late with a man alone. Maria didn't wink at me Sunday.

"*Dec. 8th.* Nothing special to record, except that Dr. Catheron came in about seven o'clock and stayed and stayed till father got tuckered out and finally went off to bed, but I hung on, for I remembered what Margret had said to Maria about it not being respectable to sit up alone with a man, and as I wanted her to be respectable I held out till I got so sleepy that I nearly fell off my chair, although I tried to talk, because Margret was so silent, and acted as if she wanted him to go. When I couldn't stand it any longer, I went into the kitchen for a drink, thinking that would wake me up. I didn't look at Maria for fear she'd wink,

but she asked me what I was doing that I wasn't in bed. "I am keeping Dr. Catheron and Margret company," says I, when she called me a fool, and asked if I didn't know anything, and said I had better leave Dr. Catheron and Margret to attend to their business, and as it was half-past nine, I went to bed. Next morning, Maria told me that he stayed till eleven. What do you think of that? I begin to understand why Maria winks in that knowing kind of way.

"*Dec. 9th.* What do you guess has happened? Maria says I ought to have known what was going on under my nose, and perhaps I ought. I see it now plain enough, but I supposed a fellow would mourn more than a year for one girl before he started after another. Didn't you? Well, Dr. Catheron and Margret are engaged! and her face shines like a glass bottle, just as yours did when you stood up to be married. They settled it last night after I went to bed, and Maria, who was listening at the foot of the stairs, heard him kiss her when he went away and call her his darling. How flat! It's well enough for you and Hal, but Dr. Catheron and Margret are older and different. Margret told mother about it this morning, and she's gone off on another tack of verses, matrimonial mostly. I don't know whether Dr. Catheron has asked father or not, as Harry did. If he has, he didn't do it before me, and he hasn't said anything to me about it, but then, as I said, he is different from Harry, and I don't suppose that he and Margret will be half as soft as you and Harry were. He is very nice, though, and when he called this afternoon he seemed quite brotherly, and called me "Jack, my boy" and inquired after you, and sent his regards, and stayed till I don't know how long; but I knew enough to go to bed."

After a few days Jack wrote again:

"Dr. Catheron is here every night, and Patrick every other night, and Margret doesn't say anything more to Maria about not being respectable, and she wears a red bow and some gold nubs in her ears. She's owned up to me that she's engaged, but says she's going to stay home this winter because she knows it would be so lonesome for us without her, as indeed it would; and when she goes away I don't know what we shall do. If I send this to-day it will go in the ship on Saturday, so no more at present.

"Yours to command

"JACK RATHBURN."

"P. S. Send me some postage stamps. I am making a collection."

CHAPTER XLVI.

DR. CATHERON'S WOOING.

During the days which succeeded Nannie's departure, Dr. Catheron was at the farm-house much oftener than Mrs. Rathburn's state of health seemed to require, while Marguerite, who felt that without these visits she could scarcely have endured the dreary monotony of the household, often found herself at the window watching for his coming. Then when she saw the head of Nero appearing over the hill she would disappear, and by busying herself either in her mother's room or in the kitchen, pretend to be surprised when he came. But Dr. Catheron was not deceived, and the expression of

her eyes and the smile with which she greeted him, told him how glad she was to see him. She had tried the effect of the lavender ribbon, because she was getting a little tired of her black dress and wished to relieve it with some color, and when Dr. Catheron spoke of it and told her how becoming it was to her, she added a second bow to the folds of her dress where bows had been intended, but had never put on a third as Jack had written to Nannie. As Dr. Catheron had read her eyes so she had read his, and knew as well as he did why he was there so often, and that he was only waiting for an opportunity to see her alone. Every woman is something of a coquette, and although Dr. Catheron was not exactly the man to coquette with, she practiced it upon him a little, and he had no chance to say what he wished to say until the night when Maria, who was watching the *denouement* with a great deal of interest, managed to get Jack out of the way and leave them alone.

Now was Dr. Catheron's opportunity, which he did not seem in a hurry to take, for he enjoyed watching the color deepening on Marguerite's cheeks, and the shy drooping of her eyelids whenever she caught him looking at her, and he laughed to himself when he saw how often she glanced at the clock as if to see what time it was. She had been sitting very near him until Jack went out. Then she seated herself on the other side of the room, as far from him as possible, and seemed to be very intent upon the piece of work she was crocheting, and upon the clock, which she consulted so often that Dr. Catheron arose at last and going to

her side took the crocheting from her hands, one of which he kept in his while he said, "Marguerite, why are you continually looking at the clock? Do you think it is getting late and that I ought to go home? I'm not going. I have waited for this chance too long to lose it now."

The last words did not affect her half as much as the "Marguerite" had done. Once in the awful storm on the plain he had called her Marguerite and the sound had thrilled her with an ecstasy which she had never known before, but she had been "Miss Rathburn" to him ever since until now, when he called her Marguerite again with so much love and tenderness in his voice that she felt a second time the blood leaping through her veins and knew that her face was scarlet.

"Say," he continued, "do you wish me to go home?"

Then she looked up at him, and what he saw in her eyes was a sufficient answer. Dr. Catheron was not as impetuous or demonstrative a wooer as Harry, but he was very much in love and very much in earnest, and taking Marguerite's face between his hands he kissed her forehead and lips, saying, "I don't suppose you love me as I do you; that would be impossible, but I know you care for me some, and I'm going to tell you of my love and how long ago it began. When I saw you in Paris I knew who you were, and this of course interested me in you, but aside from that interest there was another feeling which the sight of you awoke in me, and I have never forgotten the sweet face or the brown eyes seen for a moment in the salon and

again in the sick room of your mother in New York; and they used to come back to me many a time, although Alice was living then, and it is of her that I must tell you now."

His face was very grave as he drew a chair to Marguerite's side, and putting his arm around her, went on: "I've not forgotten that it is scarcely a year since Allie died, and that to make love to another so soon is not exactly what the world would call *en regle*. But, Marguerite,—I'm going to call you that now,—I was never engaged to Allie in the true sense of the word."

"Never engaged to Alice!" Marguerite repeated. "What do you mean?" and he continued, "Do you remember I once told you that one of her peculiarities was the taking up of ideas for which there was little or no foundation, and making them real. I thought of her as a brother thinks of a beautiful sister, for she was beautiful and sweet, and such a girl as a man might love but for the terrible taint in her blood. I mean nothing derogatory to her when I say she was rather susceptible, and I think was always very fond of me. During one of her paroxysms, when I was more than usually kind to her, she conceived the fancy that I loved her, and when she was better she clung to that fancy and told her mother we were engaged, and as to contradict her made her worse I allowed it to pass, hoping the delusion, which harmed no one but myself, would not last. I think now it would have been better to have disabused her of the idea, if possible, but I knew it would make her very unhappy and probably shorten her life, which at the most could not be

long, for she had inherited from her father not only insanity but consumption, the seeds of which were rapidly developing."

"If she had lived would you have married her?" Marguerite asked, and after a moment's silence the doctor replied, "God only knows. If she had been restored bodily and mentally I might have done so, but it would have been a sacrifice of myself, and one much harder to make after I knew you. The knowledge of your engagement to Harry was both a surprise and a pain, although it should have mattered nothing. In some of Allie's strange moods she predicted that you would come some day to the Pines as its mistress, and though I looked upon such talk as the vagaries of a disordered brain, it helped to feed the passion which I know now I was feeling for you all the time. And after Allie was gone, I gave free vent to it, even though Harry stood in the way. Perhaps I ought not to confess it, but it was some consolation to me to believe that you didn't love him quite as I could make you love me if I had a chance."

"Oh, Dr. Catheron," Marguerite exclaimed, lifting her head from his shoulder where he had lain it, and was keeping it with his hand. "I did love Harry very much when we were first engaged. You mustn't think I didn't."

"Yes, I know," the doctor said. "You loved him when you were girl and boy together, but it was only a boy and girl love, or you could never have drifted apart as you did. Nothing could lessen my love for you, and if you reject me I shall go on loving you just the same to the end, and if in

future years when we both are old you should come to me you would find my arms open to receive you just as they are now.

"Harry and Nannie were better suited to each other than you and Harry, and you knew it, and were glad to give him up. I cannot be deceived in that matter. Am I not right, and haven't you been loving me all these past weeks and months, as I have been loving you?"

Marguerite would have liked to demur a little, and say she didn't know, but Dr. Catheron's arms were around her and his lips were meeting hers, and his strong will mastered her will, and she answered, "I think I have, and, let me tell you that I once thought you cared for Nannie and that if you were free you would make her your wife."

"For Nannie!" the doctor repeated. "And so I did, but not in that way. Not as I care for you. She was a dear little girl in whom I was greatly interested, but not one whom I could ever have made my wife. You alone can bear that name, the sweetest in the world, and if love and devotion and tenderness can make you happy you shall be so. I am not as yielding as Harry, I know, but your fetters, if there are any, shall never be felt. You have made me very glad, my darling, and now when will you come to me? It is so lonesome at the Pines that I must have you there very soon."

But Marguerite shook her head. "I can't leave father and mother so soon. Nannie is gone," she said. "You must wait until spring;" and from this decision he could not move her.

It was eleven o'clock by this time, and Maria, who

had been told that she could not keep Patrick with her until that hour and be respectable, had gone outside to meet him in response to his whistle, and was just coming in at the back door when she heard Dr. Catheron going out at the front.

"So there is somebody else that isn't respectable as well as myself," she said, stealing cautiously into the hall, where she stood listening to the parting, and overhearing the kisses and the "darling," which she reported to Jack the next morning.

"Irish and Yankees are much alike when love is aboard," she said to herself as she took her tallow candle and went up to bed, while Marguerite took her lamp and did likewise.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MIND CURE.

Mrs. Rathburn was very proud of the fine matches which both her daughters had made, and proudest, perhaps, of Nannie's, because there had been some opposition to it by Mrs. Bellamy, while with Marguerite everything had gone smoothly. Mrs. Catheron, who was in New York, where she intended to remain, had written to Marguerite, telling her how glad she was that she was going to the Pines as its mistress. The neighbors, too, approved of the arrangement, for Marguerite was now almost as popular with them as the doctor.

But they wondered what Mrs. Rathburn would do when both her daughters were gone.

"She will get up and walk," some of them said, adding that as it was only spleen which ailed her, she could do it if she would.

And when there was thrown into their houses a hand bill announcing the arrival in Millville of "Madame Josephine Jourdan, of Boston, Mind Cure and Magnetic Healer," one of these hand-bills was put in an envelope and forwarded to Mrs. Rathburn.

"Stuff and nonsense," Jack exclaimed, while Marguerite called the Madame a humbug, and suggested that they take the advertisement to light the fire.

But Mrs. Rathburn kept it and read it many times in connection with Nannie's letter, and as the result of her reading, Marguerite one day said to Dr. Catheron, who spent half his time at the farm-house, "Do you believe in Mind Cure?"

For a moment the doctor looked at her inquiringly, and then, as a light broke in upon him, he answered, "For your mother, yes, decidedly. Is she thinking of Madame Josephine?"

"Yes," Marguerite replied. "She is quite determined to see her."

"It's worth trying, if your mother has any faith in it, as it will rouse her to effort," the doctor said, adding that as he was going to Millville that afternoon, he would call upon the Madame and see what she was like.

"She will do. She is coming to-morrow. She has magnetism enough about her to knock one down," was the report which he brought back at

night, and the next day the Madame arrived—a tall, masculine looking woman, with a strong personality, of that kind which impresses itself upon one whether he is willing or not.

And Marguerite felt its influence not only in the piercing black eyes when they were fixed upon her, but in the touch of the powerful hands, which affected her with a sensation as if the woman had an electrical battery concealed about her person. Madame, who seemed to understand her business perfectly, asked many questions about Mrs. Rathburn, of whom she said at last, "I can help her. Let me see her, please."

Taking her to the sick room, Marguerite introduced her to her mother, whom she found in a very nervous, frightened state, and ready to draw back from the ordeal. But something in the Madame's voice, which rang through the room like a bell, conquered her timidity, and when half an hour later Dr. Catheron came in, he was met by Marguerite with a peculiar smile on her face, as she pointed to her mother's room. Going cautiously to the door, Dr. Catheron saw Mrs. Rathburn in her wheel chair sitting back to back with Madame Josephine, whose face indicated the intentness of her thoughts, while Mrs. Rathburn seemed as if about to fall asleep.

"They have been in that position for more than twenty minutes," Marguerite said to the doctor, as they withdrew into the next room, where they waited until the seance was over.

But Madame's efforts to make Mrs. Rathburn stand alone were a failure. The feet, which had

borne no weight for years, refused to do so now, and the patient was put into bed with no other perceptible result from the sitting than the redness and prickling of the limbs which Madame had rubbed so vigorously. The next day she came again, and the next, and the next, with but little success until the tenth morning, when Jack, who had been watching the performance from the next room with a look of incredulity upon his face, suddenly started for the barn, where he found his father feeding old Pedler, and in his vehemence came near thrusting the pitchfork into the horse's face.

"Father," he exclaimed, seizing him by the arm, "what do you think has happened? Mother is standing up! Come quick, before she gives out."

Half stupefied with amazement, Mr. Rathburn followed Jack to his wife's room, where he saw Agnes on her feet, with no other support than the bedstead, to which she was clinging. She had been standing there four or five minutes, and, urged on by the Madame, was trying to walk, when, catching sight of her husband, the spell was broken, and she fell forward into his arms, very white and faint with excitement and exhaustion. The next day, when the Madame came again, the rubbings and sittings were resumed, this time with the result that Agnes took two or three steps, with Madame and Marguerite supporting her. On the occasion of his interview with the mind cure healer, Dr. Catheron had said to her, "Cure Mrs. Rathburn, and you shall have a hundred dollars." With this as an incentive, the Madame did her best, and with so good effect that at the end of three or four weeks Mrs. Rathburn could

walk about the house with the help of a cane, and on one fine day had been as far as the barn with her husband's arm around her. It seemed like a miracle, and people came from far and near to see the woman upon whom it had been performed. Maria, who from the start had connected the business with the evil one, was more confirmed than ever in her belief that he had taken possession of the house, and had serious thoughts of packing her trunk and leaving, while Jack scoffed at the whole thing so far as mind over mind was concerned.

"Just as if sitting with your back against somebody else's back could cure you," he said. "It was the rubbing and the effort which did it. Sposin' I was to hold my arm still for five years, wouldn't it get stiff so I couldn't use it, but if I tried and tried, the power would come back just as it did to mother's feet. Madame Josephine indeed! She's a humbug!"

But in spite of Jack's disbelief, the fact remained that his mother could walk, and Mr. Rathburn's delight knew no bounds. He did not say much, and Agnes might never have known how he felt had she not missed him one night from her side, and going in search of him found him in the kitchen kneeling by a chair and thanking God for restoring to him his dear wife, whom he called "Aggie" just as he used to call her in the early days of their marriage. As she had on her slippers, he did not hear her until she knelt beside him and putting her arm around his neck, sobbed out, "Oh, John, I didn't know that you cared so much, or loved me so well. I thought, perhaps, it had all died out, I've been a

drag on you so long, but it is over now, and with God's help I shall not fall back again."

Those were very happy days at the farm-house, when Mrs. Rathburn, although still very weak and unable to endure much, was able to be up and was gathering strength day by day, while Mr. Rathburn grew young and almost merry, and Maria reported to Marguerite that she had actually heard him trying to whistle "Captain Jenks," which he had heard so often from Jack. That Agnes could walk was an undisputed fact, but whether from the effects of magnetism or mind cure or will power, or in answer to Nannie's earnest prayers, when she heard from Marguerite what was going on, who can tell? Nannie believed it was the latter, and rejoiced with exceeding great joy for her mother restored to them again.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

MRS. HARRY BELLAMY.

The glad news reached Nannie in Sorrento, where, at one of the hotels, she and Miss Grady had a suite of rooms opening upon a broad balcony, where, sheltered from observation, they could look out upon the beautiful view before them,—the lovely bay with its white-winged ships moving hither and thither;—Capri always enshrouded in a mist of blue;—Naples in the distance, on its terraced hills, and to the right Vesuvius, seen through the golden haze,

with its wreath of smoke by day and its columns of flame by night, when darkness was brooding over the water. Nannie was very happy, for no shadow had dimmed the sunshine of her married life, and Harry was quite as devoted a husband as he had been a lover, while Lucy Grady, who had become greatly attached to the little woman, petted her almost as much as Harry himself. They had stopped for two weeks in Paris, where Harry had consulted an eminent specialist with regard to Nannie's shoulder.

"There is nothing serious," the doctor said. "It is only a little higher than the other and any dressmaker can remedy that."

In the exuberance of his joy at having this anxiety lifted from his mind, Harry took Nannie to a fashionable dressmaker, to whom he gave instructions to fit out little Madame without reference to cost. Pleased with this new and pretty importation from America, the dressmaker did fit her without reference to cost, and sent Harry a bill which took his breath away, it was so much larger than he had expected; but he paid it, and then denied himself many things in which he would otherwise have indulged, but heaped upon Nannie every possible luxury. She had seen a good deal of the world since she left Rocky Point, and had shrunk from it at first as from something of which she was afraid and did not quite like. But she was getting accustomed to it now, and accustomed to being stared at by strangers, who sometimes said in her hearing, "What a lovely little creature that is with the tall husband." She was very proud of Harry and glad

to have him noticed, but didn't like hearing herself spoken of so often as small and *petite*.

"It was well enough when I was a girl," she said, "but now that I am a married woman I ought to be taller;" and she wore the highest heels she could find, and was glad that her Paris dresses, which had been made with a direct reference to her stature, added to her apparent height.

Dress was very becoming to Nannie, and when she saw herself in the mirror clad in a long tea-gown of French blue satin, with an embroidered front of rose-buds, which harmonized with her complexion and her eyes, she was conscious of a feeling of gladness because she was pleasing to Harry. Her hair did not trouble her much; she had curled it and instead of punishing her for it, God had given her a great deal of happiness and she rejoiced in it as something which made her more attractive to her husband. It was in Paris that she received Jack's diary telling her of Marguerite's engagement with Dr. Catheron.

"Oh, I'm so glad. I wonder how Harry will take it," she said. Then hearing him in an adjoining room she called out, "Come quick, Harry. I've such a funny letter from Jack. Guess what he has written."

Taking her upon his knee,—his favorite way of holding her,—Harry said to her, "What is it, Mignon? Let's have it."

"Marguerite is going to marry Dr. Catheron," Nannie replied, looking steadily at him.

"By Jove, that's first rate," Harry exclaimed, while Nannie drew a breath of relief.

"Then you really don't care?" she asked, as with

her lead pencil she began to write something on his forehead.

"Care! Why should I?" Harry said. "Marguerite is just the girl for Dr. Catheron, and he is just the man for her."

"But you loved her once very much, and I didn't know but you might be a little speck sorry to see her the wife of some one else, even if you have *me*, who am so greatly her inferior," Nannie continued, and Harry replied, "Certainly, I loved her, and should have gone on loving her to the end of the chapter, I suppose, if she hadn't kicked and I'd never seen you, whom I prefer to all the Marguerites in the world. But why are you jabbing that pencil so into my forehead, and what are you writing?"

"Can't you guess?" Nannie answered, putting the pencil to her lips and beginning to write again, while Harry tried to make out the word.

"That's 'M,'" he said, "because it was over and over and over, and that long-tailed letter must be 'y.' 'M-y,'-my. My what? I can't make out the rest."

Putting both her hands around his ears as if afraid some one might hear her, Nannie whispered, "My love, my love. I've written it all over your forehead, because I love you so much and am so glad that you love me; and now I am going to rub it out."

She brought a damp towel and scrubbed away at his forehead until it was nearly blistered. But Harry rather liked it, and if he had not he would have endured it, and a great deal more for the sake of Nannie, whose face he covered with kisses when the scrubbing process was over, and she was again

upon his knee, with her arms around his neck. How happy they were together, the girl and boy husband and wife, and how Nannie revelled in the happiness which grew in intensity every day until she sometimes felt as if she could bear no more. From Paris they went to Sorrento, where they spent the remainder of the winter, and where their life was one constant idyl of delight, with nothing to mar its brightness. But through it all Nannie never forgot her simple, childlike faith in God, which manifested itself in every act and was insensibly working its influence for good upon her husband, who, although he called her a fanatic, and laughed at her for thinking that God cared for the little things which troubled her, found himself gradually believing in the faith which made her character so lovely, and brought God so near to her.

CHAPTER XLIX.

MRS. GUY CATHERON.

She had been married a week, and on a morning in May a carriage from the Pines was waiting at the station for the bride and groom, who were expected to arrive from New York. The wedding had been very quiet, with only a few of the neighbors and Dr. Catheron's step-mother present, but a more festive air had pervaded the household than when Nannie was married, for she was going far away, and

the thought of the parting had cast a shadow over everything. With Marguerite it was different, for although she was virtually leaving her home for good, she would be so near that she could come to it every day if she liked. Added to this was the fact that instead of being an invalid, wrapped in shawls and seated in her chair, Mrs. Rathburn was now doing the duties of hostess, with much of the grace and suavity of manner on which she had prided herself in the days of her girlhood. She had not back-slidden as Jack predicted she would, for, having been rescued from the bondage which had held her fast so long, she showed no desire to take it up again. She would never be very strong, or a very efficient housekeeper, and John's shirts would probably be buttonless if Maria did not sew them on, and the house would be covered with dust while she was deep in the mysteries of a poem. But the wheel-chair was banished to the attic, when it was not in use by some invalid in the neighborhood. And her cupboard was emptied of drugs and boxes of pills, and, under the new régime, she was recovering so much of her former good looks and youthfulness of appearance that one of her friends told her that she looked more like Marguerite's sister than her mother. But Agnes was quite willing to be the mother of so handsome a bride as Marguerite, and was very proud of her and of her elegant son-in-law, of whom, notwithstanding that she knew him so well, she stood a little more in awe than she had of Harry Bellamy. A good deal of this feeling, however, wore away when, after the ceremony, the doctor called her mother, and kissed her as he said

good-bye, promising to take good care of her daughter and bring her safely back.

Their destination was New York where Marguerite visited all the haunts she knew so well, meeting with many old friends, and going to Greenwood, where she stood by her mother's grave and wished that the sleeper at her feet could know how perfectly happy she was. Mrs. Bellamy had called upon her as soon as she heard she was in town, and invited her to dinner, but Marguerite declined the invitation as her time was so fully occupied. She, however, returned the call, and sat for an hour or more with Mrs. Bellamy, who seemed greatly changed, and whose talk was mostly of Harry, from whom she did not hear as often as she wished.

"You don't know how lonely I am without him," she said, with a quaver in her voice, "or how I have regretted my opposition, but for which you would have been my daughter."

This was an insinuation which Marguerite could not let pass without correcting it.

"Dear Mrs. Bellamy," she said, "I am exceedingly glad that you did oppose Harry at the first and so set in motion the train which took us from each other. But without your interference it must have come sooner or later. Nannie will make Harry a much better wife than I should have done, and he will be happier with her, for although I have the stronger will, Nannie, by her gentleness and sweetness and childlike simplicity, will mould him at her pleasure and make him a better man every way. And when they come home and you know her better,

you will love her as you never could have loved me."

Mrs. Bellamy shook her head, for the dairymaid still rankled a little, although she was beginning to think that if she could have Harry back she would accept almost any one as his wife. Marguerite did not see her again, for the next day she returned to Rocky Point and her new home, which was looking very lovely in the bright May sunshine. Everywhere the young leaves were putting forth upon the trees and shrubs, some of which were in full bloom, while the crocuses and daffodils were blossoming in the borders, and the grass was green as in the summer time, and the air was sweet with the odor of the pines, as she drove through the grounds with her hand clasped in her husband's, and a look on her face which told how happy she was.

"Welcome home my darling, my queen," the doctor said, as he led her into the hall where the servants were waiting to receive her. "Will you go to your room now, or wait until after lunch?" he asked, when the presentation was over.

Marguerite preferred going to her room, a large, airy chamber which had been refurnished and fitted up with direct reference to her taste, and was so luxurious and beautiful that she stopped upon the threshold to wonder at and admire it.

"Oh, Guy," she exclaimed, calling him by the name he had insisted upon, and which had never sounded to him just as it did when spoken by her, "Oh, Guy, it is a perfect gem. I never had any thing so pretty as this in my life. How kind you are to me."

"I am glad if you like it. I thought you would, and I wanted to give you back some of your old life if I could," the doctor said, and then stood watching her and enjoying her delight and the brightness on her face as she examined every article in the room. When she was through with that he said, "Come now into your boudoir and see what you think of that."

It had been Marguerite's request that no one should make her a bridal present, not even her husband, and this wish had been carried out, while some of the neighbors commented upon it as people will, and wondered why the doctor should have brought no gift to the bride. But the doctor knew his own business, and since his marriage day he had not been happier than he was now when he saw her start of surprise and felt the tight clinging of her hand to his arm as she caught sight of all her boxes of jewelry on the dressing-table, with the precious stones, some in new settings and some in the old, glistening on their satin beds and seeming to smile a welcome to her.

"Oh, Guy," she cried, "what does it mean, and when did you see old Skinflint?"

She had scarcely thought of him in New York, or of her diamonds, which she might have worn had she had them, and her only idea now was that the Jew had been made to disgorge her treasures, over which she bent lovingly as over some old friends she had never expected to see again.

"When did you see Skinflint and why didn't you take me with you, and what is his real name?" she asked.

And as the doctor did not answer her, she

turned and looked at him and read the truth in his face.

"Guy," she said, throwing herself into the arms which enfolded her so lovingly, "Oh, Guy, you are old Skinflint yourself, and I never suspected it. What shall I say? How can I thank you? Oh, Guy, Guy!"

He had never seen her so moved, and while he soothed and kissed and caressed her, he said, "Don't try to thank me, Marguerite. I was glad to do it, and I have been amply repaid in keeping from you a secret which I knew you would know some time, and in seeing you so happy. And now, will you try some of the diamonds and see if they are as becoming to Mrs. Guy Catheron as they were to Marguerite Rathburn."

"Not for lunch," Marguerite said, "but at dinner, if you like, I will put on my royal apparel. Father and mother and Jack will be with us then, you know."

Dr. Catheron had suggested that the Rathburns should dine with them on their first night at home because he thought it would please Marguerite, who would never have asked it herself, but who was glad of this early opportunity to show her family how welcome they were at the Pines. Mrs. Rathburn was very proud of the invitation, and talked a great deal about it to her neighbors and Maria, but her husband, who knew how out of place he should feel, would much rather have stayed at home, while even Jack, remembering what Nannie had told him of the grand ceremony, felt some misgivings, especially as his dancing-school

training had not included table etiquette, and Nan was not there to post him. And still, like his mother, he, too, felt rather elated at this speedy recognition of kinship on the part of the doctor, who had never come down to his level like Harry, and when some boys asked him to join in a game of base ball he declined rather loftily, saying he couldn't, as he was going up to Margret's.

Several times during the day he practiced his best bow before Maria, and then before Pedler, who about half-past four, carried the trio to the door of the Pines, where the doctor came out to meet them, and helping Mrs. Rathburn accomplish the corkscrew, took her to Marguerite, who welcomed her lovingly, saying, "Guy says this is to be your home whenever you choose to make it so, and you know I shall always be glad to have you here."

At the doctor's request, Marguerite wore one of the many Paris gowns which she had brought home with her two years ago, and which, as they were then in advance of the American fashions, were now, with a few changes, quite in style. Mrs. Rathburn had never seen Marguerite in a dinner dress before, and she looked at her with wonder and admiration, she was so lovely in the delicate lilac silk of two contrasting shades, with high sleeves and soft folds crossing each other in the front of the waist and fastened on the side with bows of ribbon and an antique buckle. She had her diamonds in her ears and the arrow at her throat, and with the rich bloom on her face and the sparkle in her eyes was so beautiful that Jack forgot his bow and exclaimed, "By ginger, Mrs. Catheron! Ain't you a stunner!"

"You can kiss me, if I am," Marguerite said laughingly, but Jack, although he kissed her, kept a little aloof, as if afraid he might do some damage to her or her dress.

The dinner, which the doctor had ordered as simple as possible so as not to confuse his guests, passed very pleasantly, and after the colored waiter had gone, Marguerite took from her pocket a letter she had found waiting for her from Nannie, who was in Paris, and who had sent her own and Harry's photographs.

"Isn t she lovely?" she said, passing Nannie's picture to her mother, who, but for the face, would never have recognized Nannie, who used to scrub the kitchen floor, in the young lady standing near an open window, attired in an evening dress more wonderfully made than Marguerite's, inasmuch as it was the very last design and cut low in the neck, on which Mrs. Bellamy's pearls were showing, while the arms were bare nearly to the shoulder, except for the long gloves which came above the elbows. Her hair, which had evidently been in the hands of a skillful artist, was worn low at the back of her head, where it seemed to be tied in a graceful knot, from which a few curls were falling, somewhat after the fashion of Carlo Dolce's Magdalen with the alabaster shell.

"Oh-h! look, John! It's Nannie in full dress," Mrs. Rathburn said, as she gave the photograph to her husband and asked what he thought of it.

"I'm not up to fashions, and it looks to me more like a play actress than Nan, though I s'pose it is all right," was Mr. Rathburn's comment, as he

passed it on to Jack, who, never having attended a large party, or any party, in fact, except the gatherings in the neighborhood, where they played "Snap-and-catch-em" and "Button," with sundry other exhilarating games, knew nothing of full dress, and in his amazement stopped scraping the ice-cream from his saucer, and exclaimed, "Why, she's left off some of her clothes! I didn't think that of Nan!"

Marguerite laughed heartily at Jack's criticism, while she tried to explain that this was an evening dress, and really very moderate in its make.

"That may be," Jack said, "but it's too fine a lady for Nan. I'd rather see her in her old gingham gown and apron."

"But you must remember she is Mrs. Harry Bellamy now, and must conform to her new position," Mrs. Rathburn interposed, with a feeling that she would like to try the effect of just such a dress on herself, if she were ten years younger.

When dinner was over and they had returned to the drawing-room, Marguerite read Nannie's letter, in which, after congratulating her sister and the doctor, who, she hoped, would be as happy as she and Harry were, she wrote:

"I send our photographs, taken as we looked at the grand ball given by one of the foreign ministers. I didn't want my dress made that way, but Harry and Miss Grady insisted, and said it was becoming, and perhaps it is, but when I first put it on, I was almost ashamed to have Harry look at me. But when at the party I saw so many made that way, only so much lower, even when the ladies' necks

were skinny and their arms like my curling stick, I felt better. I know father and Jack will not like it, and will think it is not much like little Nan. But you tell them I am just the same, and if necessary, could go back to the old calico and the kitchen, if Harry were with me. I couldn't lose him and be happy again. He is so kind to me, and so is Miss Grady, and I am glad she came with us, for without seeming to do so, she has taught me many things of which I was ignorant, and I don't believe I am as countrified now as I was. Harry says I am not, although he laughs because I will talk of *our folks.* He says *our family* is more aristocratic, but I don't care; you are *my folks* and I am always thinking of you and longing for you, and that brings me to a plan I have so much at heart that I hope I shall not be disappointed in it. You wrote me that you and Dr. Catheron would join us in our Egyptian trip next winter. Now, why not come at once and bring Jack with you."

"Oh-h!" Jack exclaimed, with a quick drawing in and letting out of his breath, while Marguerite read on:

"We are going to London in June, then cross from Harwich to Rotterdam and make our way *via* Hamburg and Copenhagen to Throndhjen by the first of July. Then to the North Cape, taking Stockholm and St. Petersburg on our return. August and September in Germany and Switzerland, October in Paris, November in Nice, December in Venice, and then go to Egypt. It makes me tired to think of it, but it is only one day at a time, and I am so strong now. Will you come this summer? and if not, will you send Jack? He can cross alone and we will meet him in Liverpool, and I am going to pay all the expenses and send father money enough to hire a man in Jack's place, and a great

deal more, too, for him and mother to use as they please. You know about Miss Grady's gift to me, which does not seem real yet, and which I'd like to make over to Harry. But he says it is safer with me than with him, as he would spend it, while I shall keep it and have it when his Tacoma money is all gone. Think how rich I am with three thousand a year, and how many I can make happy. And first my *folks*. I will say that in spite of Harry. Persuade them to let Jack come this summer, if you do not. We used to talk so much of the old world, which we never expected to see, and now I am here and Jack is coming. I feel it, just as Alice used to feel things which were in the future. Dear Allie, I wonder if she knows how happy I am, and that I am having *loaves* instead of a loaf. Harry joins me in wishing you to send Jack, to whom he once promised all the things we are now able to give him."

There was silence for a few minutes after the reading of Nannie's letter, while Jack's face was a study, as he looked first entreatingly at his father, then at his mother, then at Marguerite, and then at the doctor, who was the first to speak.

"Jack, would you like to go?" he asked.

"You better b'lieve I would, if father can spare me," Jack said, with another long drawn breath, and the doctor went on: "I intend to join Harry and Nannie in the autumn, but cannot go earlier, as I wish to have some little time at home alone with my wife," and he put his arm around Marguerite, who was standing by his side. "But," he continued, "I see no reason why Jack should not go this summer, as Nannie proposes. I had planned to take him with us, and make him our charge, but Nannie

has forestalled me, for a time at least. I think you'd better let him go."

"Yes, father, do; and I'll work like a dog to make it up when I come back," Jack said, grasping the arm of his father, who, after a moment, gave the brief answer, "I'll see."

Jack, who knew that this was equivalent to consent, felt as if treading on air, and there was not, perhaps, in the world a happier boy than the one who that night confided to Maria and Tom and Shep and Pedler the wonderful news that he was going "abroad."

"Going to see the midnight sun, and Cheops, and the Sphinx, and the Nile, where Moses used to swim and Pharaoh take a bath. What do you think of that, old feller?" he said to Pedler, to whom he was giving his supper, and then as he returned to the house he began to whistle, not "Capt. Jenks of the Horse Marines," but "Where was Moses when the lights went out," as something more in accordance with the present state of affairs.

Meanwhile Dr. Catheron was sitting with Marguerite in the moonlight on the rose satin couch, with the warm evening air blowing softly through the window behind them. It was the first opportunity they had had of being really alone since coming home in the morning, and with his arm around her they were rehearsing the growth of their love from the beginning, and trying to settle just the moment when it actually took root.

"It seems to me now that you have always been a part of my life, it has been so full of joy since I knew that my darling loved me," the doctor said,

kissing the face which Marguerite held up to him, as she replied, "And I never thought it possible for any one to be as happy as I am with you. Do you think Allie would care if she knew?"

"No, darling. She would be glad," the doctor answered quickly, while he recalled what Alice had said to him of the night when he would bring Marguerite home as his bride and sit upon the rose satin couch in the moonlight, as he was sitting, with the wind blowing the lace curtains behind him just as it was blowing them now, and she would be there to see it. Was she there? He did not think so, but if she were, it was with a benediction, he was sure, for there could be no jealousy in the abodes of the blest, and he drew Marguerite closer and closer to him while he said, "God has been very good to us, my wife,—the dearest name in all the world,—and you are the dearest woman who ever bore it."

CHAPTER L.

GOOD-BYE.

The June day is much like the July day on which we first saw John Rathburn sitting upon the wall and waiting for the signal that dinner was ready, and now he is sitting under the maple tree in the yard, with Agnes at his side, clad in a tasteful tea gown which Marguerite brought her from New York, and looking quite the poetess, and

very pretty, too, with her hair arranged in a style which she has studied a good deal, and which is very becoming.

At their feet in the grass Shep and Tom are lying, so near to each other that Shep's tail occasionally brushes Tom's back, but elicits no spit of disapprobation. There has been a treaty of peace between the two ever since Jack went away, for it would seem that missing him had drawn them together and made them as friendly as a cat and dog can ever be. Mr. Rathburn is in his shirt sleeves, but the shirt is white and clean, and there are about him certain signs which tell that he has more leisure now and is taking the world rather easy.

"Aggie," he says, putting his hand on hers, after looking cautiously round to be sure that neither Maria nor Patrick can see him, "Aggie, don't you think we are pretty comfortable in our old age, even if the nest is empty and the kids all gone?"

"Yes, John, very comfortable, thanks to Marguerite and Nannie," Agnes answers, pressing the hand which had toiled so hard. "And that is a very poetical idea about the empty nest. I think I must use it, but shall say *birdlings* instead of *kids*. Yes, we are very comfortable, but I don't see why you talk of old age, when I am only forty-six, while you are fifty. I don't call that old, do you?"

"Perhaps not, as time counts," John replies; "but seems to me I have lived many years since we were married, but never have I been so happy as I am now, with you as you used to be, and no care on my mind for to-morrow's bread, thanks, as you say,

to Marguerite and Nannie, but greater thanks to God, who has given us such good children."

And truly John had reason to be thankful that at the last, in middle life, freedom from care had come to him, and that he could sit in the shade or in the sunshine, as long as he liked, knowing that his work would go on as well without as with him.

Patrick, the hired man, who was now Maria's husband, was efficient and faithful, and had brought with him many new ideas of progress which simplified matters and made them easier, while under his management the farm would this year yield much more than it had ever done before, and John even contemplated buying a strip of land adjoining his, which he had long coveted. This he could afford to do, for Marguerite had added her quota of good to the household. Her western property had risen in value, and while the doctor did not encourage her to sell it, he approved of her making it over to her father, who was thus sure of an income of at least five hundred dollars, with a prospect of increase. To a millionaire five hundred dollars is nothing, but to John Rathburn it was a fortune, and it was a happy day when he drew his first check and deposited the money in the bank, where it was to stay until Jack came home, when it was to be used to send him away to school.

"And if he wants to go to college he shall," John said to his wife, as they sat under the maple tree and talked of the boy who was then half way across the ocean on his way to Liverpool, where he landed a few days later, and was warmly greeted by Harry

and Nannie, and with them took the train for London.

Here they stayed a few days to show Jack something of the city, and then started on their northern trip. There was a hurried journey through England, and across the German sea to Rotterdam. Thence on through Copenhagen and Christiana to Throndhjem, and when the boys in Rocky Point were firing off crackers in honor of the 4th of July, and hunting around for boxes and barrels with which to kindle the bonfire at night, the little ship Capella was threading its way among the Fiords of the Norwegian coast, with eighty passengers on board. And among them all there was not one so supremely happy and wildly enthusiastic as Jack. Harry and Nannie were still too much absorbed in each other to be specially interested in Torghatten, or the Lapps, or the whales, and were content to sit in some sheltered nook, holding each other's hands and talking of the love which was just as fresh and sweet as when it was first declared and accepted. But Jack enjoyed everything and saw everything, and after the midnight sun showed itself he stayed on deck every night until one or two o'clock, loath to leave the wondrous sight.

"What's the use of coming so far if I don't see all there is to be seen?" he said to Nannie, when she told him he would wear himself out and ought to go to bed.

And when the North Cape was reached, he was the first on shore, and the first in the long line of passengers toiling up the steep, zig-zag path to the top of the mountain, and when at last the cannon

which told that it was midnight went echoing across those far off waters, Jack's shout was the loudest of all, as, waving his arms in the air, he cried, "Oh, father, can't you hear me? I am standing on the North Cape, with the midnight sun shining over me, and the Arctic Ocean around me, and I am going to Egypt in the winter. Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

Harry thought he was crazy and laid a restraining hand on his shoulder. But Jack shook it off and said, "Let me shout. I shall burst if I don't. Three cheers for father, mother, Marguerite and Nan!"

THE END.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

This book is under no circumstances to be taken from the Building

Form 410